University of Alberta

The Interrupted Narrative.
Tadeusz Peiper and His Vision of Literature (1918-1939)

by

Piotr Grella-Możejko ©

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For:

my Father, Prof. Edward Możejko

Kasia Zoledziowski

Anya Grella-Możejko

with deep gratitude

The Interrupted Narrative.
Tadeusz Peiper and His Vision of Literature (1918–1939)

Abstract

This doctoral dissertation focuses on the Polish avant-garde thinker and practitioner Tadeusz Peiper (1891 – 1969) (who was active mainly between the First and the Second World Wars) and on his work in the literary domains of theory, criticism, poetry, drama and novel. Between 1918 and 1939 Peiper had become the leading theorist of the Polish avant-garde in general and the so-called Kraków Avant-garde [Awangarda krakowska] in particular. His rôle as a leader of the progressive literary movement in the newly-independent Poland is hard to overestimate – and begs to be investigated from both the historical and critical perspectives. The dissertation is intended to offer a detailed descriptive analysis of Peiper's writings, his theories and criticism, as well as their manifestations within the realm of creative writing. It is argued that without Peiper's broad influence, the avant-garde movement in Poland - and its subsequent international image – would be incomplete.

Based on significant examples, many translated from Polish into English for the first time, the dissertation offers a comparative analysis, and later, a summary of the development of Peiper's thought within the context of the Polish and European avant-garde and modernist movements; it deals at length with relationships between Peiper's theories and their practical manifestations - his critical writings, poetry, drama and prose.

Foreword: The Interrupted Narrative

The dissertation focuses on the Polish avant-garde thinker and practitioner Tadeusz Peiper (1891 – 1969), who was active mainly between the First and the Second World Wars, and on his work in the literary domains of theory, criticism, poetry, drama and novel. Between 1918 and 1939 Peiper had become the leading theorist of the Polish avant-garde in general and the so-called *Awangarda krakowska* [Kraków Avant-garde] in particular. His rôle as a leader of the progressive literary movement in the newly-independent Poland is hard to overestimate – and begs to be investigated from both the historical and critical perspectives. The dissertation is intended to offer a detailed descriptive analysis of Peiper's writings, his theories and criticism, as well as their manifestations within the realm of creative writing. It is argued that without Peiper's broad influence, the avant-garde movement in Poland—and its subsequent international image—would be incomplete.

Through his theories, critical articles, and artistic endeavours such as poetry, novel(s) and stage works, Peiper was able to offer an interesting and original alternative to Polish Futurism, Expressionism and traditional offshoots of pre-First World War Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism and Symbolism, as well as to two main "made in Poland" movements: the radical Formists and the classicist Skamander groups. Throughout the twenty years between the wars, Peiper, then and now often referred to as the "Pope" of the Polish avant-garde (or at least the "pope" of Polish avant-garde poetry), attracted a closely-knit

group of followers who gradually came to the forefront of Polish literature. The fact that in the end many of these followers chose creative and theoretical paths different from the ones proposed by Peiper does not in any way underrate the latter's importance as—along with Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (the famous Witkacy) and Leon Chwistek—possibly the most conscious and well-read, intellectually refined (one would say "cosmopolitan" in the best sense of the word), disciplined, versatile and forward-looking of all his contemporary Polish literary theoreticians. The aim of the dissertation is to offer an integrated look at the various aspects of Peiper's theoretical and creative output, as well as to (re)evaluate his position in the broader context of European avant-garde and modernism.

Based on significant examples, many translated from Polish into English for the first time, the dissertation offers an analysis, and later, a summary of the development of Peiper's thought within the context of the Polish and European avant-garde and modernist movements;[1] it deals at length with relationships between Peiper's theories and their practical manifestations - his critical writings, poetry, drama and prose.

[A note on the approach to translation: in most cases every effort had been made to capture Peiper's unique style, both in his critical prose and poetry. Al-

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[1] Peiper witnessed the outbreak of the First World War in Paris where, among others, he attended Bergson's lectures. A citizen of the Austro-Hungarian empire, he was allowed to leave for Spain where he could receive money from Poland (his family was fairly well off), and where he remained until 1921. In Spain, he met numerous avant-garde artists and began his critical work by publishing in a local periodical (in Spanish). There he also began his work as a translator. See: Stanisław Jaworski, *U podstaw awangardy. Tadeusz Peiper pisarz i teoretyk.* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1980) 10-15.

though several of his poems have been already translated into English, they were not used in this text in their existing English renditions, for they seemed too literal, too prose-like. Alternatively, these and other poems were translated with Peiper's intricate poetic technique in mind, and involving assonances, distant rhymes, irregular metre and the like. When necessary, the usual—always small—liberties were taken in regards to Peiper's original lexis and syntax in order to convey his messages more clearly to the English reader. Such liberties **never** affect the overall content of a poem or prose fragment preselected for translation.]

Given the interconnectedness of Peiper's theories and praxis, it seems feasible in my project to deal simultaneously with Peiper the theorist and critic, along with Peiper the poet, dramatist and novelist.

1° Of the three aforementioned major Polish contributions to æsthetics during the inter-war period—those of Witkacy, Chwistek and Peiper—Peiper's was decidedly the most positive, pragmatic and consciously divested of serious philosophical discourse. If, on the one hand, Witkacy's integral system of catastrophic monadic philosophy (he called it biological monadism) imbued his theory of Pure Form with metaphysical despair, and, on the other hand, Chwistek's rational, anti-metaphysical approach through formal logic and scientific methods laid foundations for his Theory of Plurality of Realities in art,[2] Peiper's anti-psychological, pragmatic theory focussed on technical aspects of

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[2] Jerzy Kwiatkowski. *Dwudziestolecie międzywojenne* [The Twenty Interwar Years] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 2001) 17-30.

craftsmanship such as poetic sentence, metaphor and the ensuant form. It can be argued that, in spite of Witkacy's and Chwistek's "fashionableness," Peiper's project resulted in and exercised a more far-reaching influence then the other two.

2° Another convincing point can be made in relation to Peiper's masterly approach to art and literary criticism. In many instances his critical statements anticipated creative discoveries in the areas such as kinetic sculpture (and kinetic art), film (along with Karol Irzykowski and Leon Trystan, Peiper belongs to the triumvirate of the most influential film critics in pre-war Poland), television and, partially, music (*cf.* his prediction of music created by machines), to mention a few.

3° As it has often been pointed out, Peiper's theories and critical articles served as a springboard of sorts for his artistic activities – and *vice versa*. Not infrequently, the commentators held this self-conscious tendency against the man, trying to prove that, in a sense, he was a victim of his own ideas, slavishly following the theoretical concepts laid out earlier, or conceived as a result of discoveries made within narrative modes.[3] Yet, it can easily be posited that in this particular case the close connections between theory and practice did indeed bring about some of the best poetry and stage works written in Poland during the course of the 20th Century, and predating—albeit in a rather narrow

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[3] "[i]t is impossible to avoid the overwhelming impression that his poetic practice was to a large extent determined by his theories, and that the theories are the basis of both the virtues and shortcomings of his poetry." Bogdana Carpenter, op cit. 109.

scale—narrative strategies introduced by the writers who debuted after World War II, including postmodernists..

4° As well, it seems necessary to examine Peiper's social stance, especially in light of some attempts by the Polish Marxists to attribute to him—more or less—a decidedly leftist (albeit not Communist) outlook.[4] Although it is true that before the Second World War Peiper did identify himself with the left wing of the political spectrum (his position in this regard might be referred to as that of a liberal socialist), it is also true that he never identified himself with the dogmatic Marxist Left. His self-imposed silence after the war well attests to that. It is argued that, in the case of Peiper, an ideological evolution, rather than a constant (static) outlook, is seen: from the purely æsthetic stance of the early (Spanish) period to the leftist radicalisation of the late 1920s and early 1930s to the resigned neutrality, or neutral resignation, after 1939-1945.[5]

The project is meant to fill a gap in modern scholarship. The advantages of conducting research on the theoretical and artistic work of Tadeusz Peiper and its corollaries are fourfold:

1° At present, there are very few studies available in English which deal with the Polish avant-garde before 1939 in its fascinating (even "exotic") richness, encompassing if not all, then at least the majority of movements, forms and

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[4] *Cf.* Marian Stępień and Krzysztof Woźniakowski. *Polska lewica literacka* [The Literary Left in Poland] (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe 1985) 222-227 and 354-355.

[5] While briefly discussing Peiper's post-World War Two ideological stance, in addition to the existing documentation, the argument is supported by interviews conducted with the artist's surviving relatives, to whom I have access through my ex-wife and her older sister, the latter living in Warsaw.

genres generally referred to as "avant-garde" or "modernist."[6] Within this context, and according to Polish literary criticism, Peiper's position is unassailable, yet its informative, historical justification from the point of view of English-based literary scholarship requires explanation – and elucidation.

2° Even more scarce, nay!, non-existent, are English-language texts offering a detailed look at the Tadeusz Peiper æsthetics and poetics.[7] Without such an evaluation of describing and analysing Peiper's aesthetics and poetics, it is practically impossible to examine convincingly the phenomenon of the inter-war Polish literary movements, be it "avant-garde" or "classicist."

3° The project aims at creating an opportunity for comparative analysis and decoding of Peiper's constructs—he disliked the term "theory/theories"—such as his take on poetic metaphor and his concept of "pseudonyms," and those of Thomas Stearns Eliot (namely "the objective correlative"), of Victor Shklovsky ("ostranenije" *i.e.* "defamiliarisation"), of Bogusław Schaeffer (b. 1929), Polish avant-garde composer, playwright, philosopher and theorist ("denaturisation"), and of Umberto Eco ("closed and open texts"). The goal is to prove there exist similarities between these concepts, and to demonstrate Peiper's significant contribution to the development of the avant-garde literary theory in Poland. It is implied that his chosen language of communication, *i.e.* Polish of course,

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[6] As a matter of fact, the abovementioned 1983 pioneering title *The Poetic Avant-garde in Poland 1918-1939* by Bogdana Carpenter still remains the main reference source on Polish progressive literature of that period, available in English. The time is ripe for this truly outstanding publication to be followed by studies offering analyses written from a different point of view, and of more detailed character.

[7] Not even a single Peiper article is at present available in English.

may have prevented Peiper's concepts from reaching a wider audience. In concord with Peiper's own broad, interdisciplinary methodology, emphasis is placed on interdisciplinary comparative approach, drawing parallels between theoretical models used in literature, contemporary (avant-garde) classical music, and visual arts.

4° Also, the project allows for a re-evaluation of Peiper's theoretical stance and his artistic achievement. Here, the dichotomy, or, perhaps ambiguity, within Peiper's own work as theorist and artist (poet, novelist, playwright) merits investigation. It is proposed to denote Peiper as a "pragmatic modernist" whose theories remained firmly rooted in the avant-garde soil, yet his artistic evolution finally pointed toward the acceptance of the more traditional, "classicist" paradigm. In this sense, and if such a statement is not too far-fetched, Peiper may be—paradoxically perhaps—categorised as a "proto-postmodernist," as such evolution, from experiment to tradition (enriched by the former), is not uncommon among artists associated with the post-modern awareness.

Before commencing the main argument—and before dealing at length with a subject so foreign, or so unknown, to the general English language-based literary scholarship—it appears necessary to begin the discourse with its socio-historic setting. In the introductory chapter information is given on the historic situation of Poland immediately before and after the First World War. Poland's history is comparatively little known to the English language reader.

Of course, there exist works focusing on history of Poland, but they are often outdated or, as is the case of the Norman Davies publications, not free from controversy. At the same time, it seemed necessary to provide a historical setting for further argument, especially in relation to Tadeusz Peiper's biography. Certain biographical facts are better understood when seen from a broader perspective and hence the decision to include more information on Poland's history during the years 1918 – 1939 – the period of his most energetic and influential creative as well as theoretical activity.

Chapter Two provides a general cultural background for further investigation, as well as Peiper's biography. In accordance with the current tendencies in Polish scholarship targeting foreign audiences, a synthetic view on the development and evolution of Polish culture during the interwar years is here included. Czesław Miłosz's seminal work, *The History of Polish Literature*, serves as a model of such approach. It includes large amounts both of historical and cultural information, offering in one volume an overview of Poland's history, culture and literary phenomena. This synthetic method proposed by Miłosz is here followed and used.

The chapter gives an account of Peiper's life as well as a description of him as an individual. Here, a number of extant biographical literary sources, mainly personal stories of not infrequently anecdotic character, as well as interviews conducted with the surviving members of Peiper's family, are used. The intention is to demonstrate how the author's personality and his life experience in-

fluenced his final creative retreat into silence.

Chapter Three is the central one, offering critical analysis and reëvaluation of Peiper's poetic achievements during the most productive decades of his career as a theorist, poet, critic and polemist. Of special interest here is his work in the area of poetic self-expression. During the period between, roughly, 1918 and 1939, Peiper wrote a great deal on a new understanding of the literary matter, mainly within the realm of poetry. It is safe to say that he primarily considered himself a poet and a thinker, and *then* a prose writer or a dramatist. Here, Peiper's poetry is looked upon as highly original, even unique, and of much more importance than usually allowed it by Polish scholars, commentators, and interpreters (with a few exceptions to the rule). The chapter offers close reading of several poems, selected for analysis because of their sheer beauty and metaphoric power.

Chapter Four provides an insight into Peiper's critical and literary preoccupations in the realm of prose writing. 1931 (the year when his poem *Na przykład* [For Example] was published) marks the turning point in his career, the transition from the hereto cultivated avant-garde poetics to the endorsement of the realistic narrative code (in *Na przykład* and his novels). At this point, this evolution is analysed, centring on his stage works and the 1936 novel, *Ma lat 22* [He Is Twenty-two].

The reception of Peiper's discourse in Poland may be divided into four stages, or phases, here for the sake of simplicity referred to as: 1) Dialogue; 2)

Neglect; 3) Rediscovery and Interpretation; 4) Consolidation.

1) Dialogue (1918 – 1939). This phase is characterised by a dialogue between Peiper and his proponents and opponents alike. In the course of these twenty-one years—and indeed in the preceding years, for he had already began publishing in Spain where he stayed during the Great War—Peiper created the vast majority of his artistic and critical *opus* and established himself and his work at the centre of the progressive literary movement in Poland. Regardless of what polemics he was involved in, and what polemicists he faced, Peiper was generally considered a major critical force, to whose project any poets seriously concerned with their own approaches to the poetic language had to refer. Already at this stage the evaluation of his artistic and critical contribution ranged from outright dismissal to admiration, a discrepancy that serves to confirm his importance. One could not doubt that Peiper, along with Tadeusz Boy Żeleński, Leon Chwistek, Karol Irzykowski and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, belonged during this period to the uppermost echelons of Poland's literary elite, at least as a critic.

2) Neglect (1939 – 1958). A Jew, in 1939 Peiper was forced to run for his life. He ended up in Lwów/Lviv, occupied at that time by the Soviets. Arrested by NKVD, interrogated, and then reluctantly released, he grew disillusioned as to what the Communist doctrine had to offer. During the midst of the war, living among Polish intellectuals who identified themselves with the new Communist order, Peiper showed signs of impatience and strong resistance toward their

values, often newly acquired. After the war, he published sporadically: what appeared were mainly theatrical reviews, fragments of memoirs, a novel and a translation of a Lope de Vega play. Then, as of 1953, Peiper stopped taking part in the public ("official") literary life outright. From then on he would only write, as the popular saying of the day went, "for the drawer." His Avant-garde poetics was not considered valid and valuable during those years, a period of extraordinary Communist oppression and promotion of the æsthetics of the so-called Socialist Realism. A change of attitude came about with the ground-breaking text by Janusz Sławiński, "Poetyka i poezja Tadeusza Peipera" [Tadeusz Peiper's Poetry and Poetics], published in 1958 in the literary monthly *Twórczość* [Creation].

3) Rediscovery and Interpretation (1958 – 1983). Sławiński's article opened new vistas before Polish scholars and writers, offering a brilliant, insightful, fresh and detailed look at Peiper's achievement. It was an inspirational text in the truest sense of the word, which offered new ways of looking at the heretofore neglected Avant-garde æsthetics. This text, which remains fundamental in terms of Peiper scholarship, was followed by a series of analytical studies, both articles and books, dealing with Peiper's *œuvre*, now seen as of utmost importance to the development of contemporary Polish poetry and criticism. This process of rediscovery and (re)interpretation culminated in 1968 with the publication of Stanisław Jaworski's *U podstaw awangardy. Tadeusz Peiper pisarz i teoretyk.* [At the Foundations of the Avant-garde. Tadeusz Peiper – Writer and

Theoretician], a text that was subsequently revised, expanded, and reprinted in 1980. Later on, starting in 1972, Jaworski initiated the edition of Peiper's writings, which by 2004 reached seven volumes; this collection is a model achievement in scholarly editing and publishing style. Other scholars and writers who have contributed major interpretative studies on Peiper and the Kraków Avant-garde during that time include Jan Brzękowski, Julian Kornhauser, Ryszard Krynicki, Janusz Kryszak, Julian Przyboś, Wiesław Paweł Szymański, Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz, and Adam Zagajewski.

4) Consolidation (1983 –). The publication in 1983 of two important books, Bogdana Carpenter's *The Poetic Avant-garde in Poland 1918 – 1939* and Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz's *W kręgu „Zwrotnicy"* [The *Zwrotnica* Circle], marks the beginning of the final phase in the process of reassessing Peiper's *œuvre*. The rediscoveries and reinterpretations of the previous phase now gave way to these broader analyses. With Peiper's position in Polish letters now assured, the era of analysing his work as an integral part of Polish literature in its entirety had begun. Maria Delaperrière's brilliant study, *L'avant-garde polonaise et la poésie européenne. Étude sur l'imagination poétique* (Paris, 1991), is a good illustration of this phenomenon. Delaperrière considers Peiper as one of the most important writers of the inter-war period, and analyses his work with remarkable objectiveness. The road is now open for **monographic** Peiper studies in languages other than Polish. Both the man and his *œuvre* fully deserve this recognition.

* * *

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I. Setting the Stage: Poland 1918–1939

Un polonais c'est un charmeur; deux polonais - une bagarre; trois polonais, eh bien, c'est la question polonaise.

Voltaire[1]

Enormous my theatre I see:
immense and airy spaces
peopled by shadows and faces,
their acting so clear to me.
Stanisław Wyspiański[2]

[I.1] In November 1918, after roughly a one-and-a-quarter-century absence from the map of Europe, Poland began taking shape anew.[3] One hundred and twenty-three years of partitions—and the country remained divided between the empires of Austria, Russia and Prussia from 1795 (the date of the third, and final, partition which did away with Poland's independent existence altogether) through the very end of the First World War—resulted in almost perfect disintegration of the old socio-political structure. By the turn of the 20th Century there were, in fact, three "Polands:" the relatively strong, modern capitalist, agriculture-driven West which belonged to the German Empire (the city of Poznań/Posen being its largest administrative centre); the intellectually influ-

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[1] Quoted (in English) in: Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, Vol. I "The Origins to 1795" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 511. English translation goes as follows: 'One Pole – a charmer, two Poles – a brawl; three Poles – ah, that's the Polish Question.' See also: Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 664.

[2] The second stanza of the poem *I ciągle widzę ich twarze* [*And always their faces I see*, 1904, sent as a letter to his friend, the cultural historian and archivist Adam Chmiel [All translations by P. G-M unless indicated otherwise.]:

Teatr mój widzę ogromny,
wielkie powietrzne przestrzenie,
ludzie je pełnią i cienie,
ja jestem grze ich przytomny.

[3] Incidentally, 11 November, the date of arrival in Warsaw of Józef Piłsudski, later Chief of State and supreme military commander, is now the most important Polish national holiday.

ential yet economically extremely backward Southeast, which made up the northernmost, and likely the poorest, part of the Habsburg Empire (with Lwów/Lviv/Lemberg and Kraków/Krakau – in that order – having established themselves as its major cities); and the politically unsettled but rather densely industrialised Centre-North incorporated into the Empire of the Romanovs (Warszawa, Łódź and Wilno/Vilnius traditionally considered its leading centres).[4] When the three main powers of the region—which in British and North American historiography has nearly always been referred to incorrectly as Eastern Europe, whereas in fact it lies exactly in the centre of the continent, only *reaching* towards North and East—collapsed in the course of World War I, they left behind something akin to a vacuum in which a number of heretofore subjugated, but—apart from the prudent and practical Czechs—never entirely subdued, ethnic and political contestants went gradually into action, competing for superiority. The chronically undetermined, ever-fluctuating ethnic, cultural, political and economic boundaries—now overlaid, now overlapped—always challenged and contested, were thrown into yet greater confusion by the strokes and counterstrokes of virtually everyone who could exercise even the most minute degree of power. It is not unjustified then to say that in November 1918 the idea of an independent Poland was reborn – the idea more so than the actual state itself. It took several more years of military fighting (and also in-fighting) and political strife—the disdainful Churchill famously

[4] *Cf.* Jerzy Tomaszewski and Zbigniew Landau, *Polska w Europie i świecie 1918 – 1939* [Poland in Europe and the World 1918 – 1939] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2005) 164-179.

called those conflicts 'the wars of the pygmies'[5]—before some signs of stability appeared in the wake of the Polish-Soviet war, concluded in 1921, and, in 1922, incorporation into Poland of the greater part of the natural resources- and industry-rich land of Upper Silesia. This illusory stability (one could with difficulty only call it a balance of power) would last, increasingly fragile, until September of 1939.

[I.2] First of all, it must be assumed that to the majority of inquisitive and curious minds, Poland may seem a rather uninteresting, unpleasant—if not even absurd, or at least bizarre—country[6] of people addicted to excessive idealism who are nonetheless of no practical frame of mind and whose history may on occasion be wonderfully instructive to others as much as it has NOT proven instructive to the Poles themselves. Poles have always seemed oblivious to their own mistakes and the (invariably) ensuing mischief.[7] (One of the most popular national proverbs states that 'A Pole wises up *after* the event,' or, to translate it

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[5] 'The war of giants has ended, the wars of the pygmies begin' Adrian Hyde-Price, *Germany and European Order* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) 75.

[6] Relevant statements will be supplied later on in this chapter.

[7] Even a perfunctory study of the colourful, if shady and embarrassing, Polish politics after the fall of communism in 1989 would clearly confirm the above statement. It is very interesting to note that after 1989, as the direct result of disappointment and disillusionment with the new political order as well as with its "old style" Capitalist brutality and perpetuated social-economic instability, many Poles still saw their respective futures abroad, and mass emigration has continued since: 'Only in the 1980s alone Poland lost over a million citizens...' [through voluntary emigration]; 'In 1995 32 percent of the Poles manifested their pro-emigration attitudes'; 'In 2002 it was calculated that after 1999 from 200 to 250 thousand people left Poland declaring unwillingness to return'. *Założenia programu polityki ludnościowej w Polsce. Raport w sprawie polityki migracyjnej państwa* [The Foundations of the Programme of Population Policy in Poland. Report on the Migration Policy of the State] (Warszawa: Rządowa Rada Ludnościowa [The Government Council on Population], 2006) 1-5. <www.ipiss.com.pl/teksty/raport.doc>

literally, '*after* mischief's done.')[8] To quote the disarmingly patronising G. E. Slocombe at length, who was writing early on in the 20th Century:

> Their belief in ultimate and abstract principles becomes almost a passion. Like most deeply idealistic peoples they are little practical... Beside and almost because of their ardent chivalry, their intense idealism, their elaborate culture, there grew in them a strain of extravagance, a vein of intellectual vanity, an aristocratic contempt for things common and (they said) unclean. Thus it occurred that though they could fight hard battles and lose them; could sing heroic songs and compose them; could attain brilliantly to all the distinctions of art and refinement of thought and culture, the Poles could never—until it was too late—settle down soberly to the business of self-government. When they did attempt this, and even seemed likely to succeed at it, their ruin had already been planned by avaricious neighbours.[9]

The existing stereotypes of her inhabitants as either stupid drunken peasant boors or cruel noblemen[10] chivalrous to the point of idiocy (also habitually inebriated and unspeakably cruel to their hapless peasant subjects)[11]—both kinds always zealously Roman Catholic, fanatically anti-Russian and largely anti-Semitic—concur with this image.[12]

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[8] The Polish original, 'Mądry Polak po szkodzie,' is a bit ambiguous, as it is not clear whether a Pole caused, or perhaps suffered, harm. Everyday contextual use, however, favours the former interpretation.

[9] G. E. Slocombe, *Poland* (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, Limited; New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1916) 299-300.

[10] But warns Czesław Miłosz: 'Recent conceptions should not be projected into the past, such as the cliché of Poland's having been inhabited by proud nobles and miserable peasants. This commonplace can hardly be applied to the country in the Middle Ages, when class divisions were not so sharply marked.' Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983) 8.

[11] An interesting analysis of "the noble ethos" is given in Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe. A Short History of Poland* (Oxford, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1986) 331-336.

[12] *Cf. Ubu Roi ou les Polonais* by Alfred Jarry (1896). It is symptomatic that to enforce his argument on how volatile the primitive Germans were, and how unpredictable their political assemblies, the divine Gibbon uses the example of Poland in *his* own day. Says he: 'For the Germans always met in arms, and it was constantly to be dreaded lest an irregular multitude, inflamed with faction and strong liquors, should use those arms to enforce, as well as to declare, their furious resolves. We may recollect [Gibbon continues] how often the diets of Poland have been polluted with blood, and the more numerous party has been compelled to yield to the

[Only occasionally is the honour of the nation saved, one might say, by Polish women, praised for their beauty, natural intelligence, industry, faithfulness and patriotism; and who count among their trophies such distinguished and different characters as Louis XV, Napoleon, Goethe and Balzac, not to mention a Turkish sultan!].

And it often looks like the Poles themselves are rather clumsy at changing such stereotypical perceptions – to give just a single and very telling example, one will certainly always remember the irrationally pathetic scene in the movie *Lotna* by the Oscar-winning director Andrzej Wajda, in which Polish uhlans attack German tanks with their sabres and lances![13] Wajda's *licentia poetica*, his intentions and overall achievement notwithstanding, that particular scene made for a miserable metaphor.

[To digress a little, it suffices to say that never during the September 1939 campaign did such a thing occur on the Poles' own accord. On the contrary, Polish cavalry used its mobility and firepower (anti-tank and machine gun units) to a rather great effect at the time.][14]

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more violent and seditious.' Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1998) 196. He adds, however, in a footnote: 'Even in *our* ancient parliament, the barons often carried a question not so much by the number of votes as by that of their armed followers.' Ibidem. Two centuries after Gibbon, John Julius Norwich does not hesitate to mention that '[O]ne of the most ancient classical trophies in the city [Constantinople] – the so-called 'Serpent Column' brought by Constantine from Delphi, where it had been erected in the Temple of Apollo by thirty-one Greek cities in gratitude for their victory over the Persians at the battle of Plataea in 479 BC' was vandalised in the following way: 'The heads of the three intertwined serpents are believed to have been chopped off by a drunken member of the Polish embassy to the Sublime Porte in 1700.' John Julius Norwich, *A Short History of Byzantium* (London, New York, Victoria, Toronto, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1998) 13.

[13] Andrzej Wajda, *Lotna*, screenplay by Andrzej Wajda and Wojciech Żukrowski. Poland 1959.

[14] See: Davies, op. cit., Vol. II "1795 to the Present" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 435-439.

[I.3] For the sake of pleasure and to further our line of reasoning, let us imagine for a moment the appealing scenario of a newly aroused, friendly mass interest in the aforementioned country and its culture, not just its women and (rather too heavy) cuisine. Such an outpouring of curiosity could never be relied upon, of course, as there are a few other countries in the region, such as Russia, which are traditionally more interesting to scholars and students, if not yet to the unadventurous tourist. Paradoxically, it seems nowadays people tend to allocate less and less time to things as impractical as heterogeneous cultural discourses (dialogue; multilogue),[15] while apportioning more and more of it to exploring (succumbing to) ideologically homogeneous codes of social narrative imposed by the *egotistic* political, economic and, last but not least, religious genres (monologue). (To use within this context the expression 'Orwellian' seems too evident, too trivial).[16] The deceptively puzzling (*i.e.* not puzzling at all) break-

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[15] *Cf.* Jan Mukařovský (Janusz Sławiński, Ed.), "Dialog a monolog" in: *Wśród znaków i struktur*. Transl. Jacek Baluch, Marta renata Mayenowa, Józef Mayen, Lucylla Pszczołkowska (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1970) 185-222. Although preoccupied with theatre, Mukařovský's argument can be applied to larger social units and behavioural tropes.

[16] Says Lyotard: '259. If humanity were progressing toward the better, it would not be because "things are getting better" and because the reality of this betterment could be attested through procedures for establishing reality, but because humans would have become so cultivated and would have developed an ear so attuned to the Idea (which is nonetheless unpresentable) that they would feel its tension on the occasion of the most apparently impertinent, with regard to it, facts and that they would supply the very proof of progress by the sole fact of their susceptibility. This progress could therefore be compatible with the general feeling that "things are getting worse." In its aggravation, the gap between Ideas and observable historical-political reality would bear witness not only against that reality but also in favor of those Ideas.

'260. But what assurance is there that the humans will become more cultivated than they are? If culture (culture of the mind, at least) requires work and thus takes time, and if economic genre imposes its stakes of gaining time on the greater part of phrase regimens and genres of discourse, then culture, as a consumer of time, ought to be eliminated. Humans will

down of interaction protocols, meaning widespread rejection of simultaneous, concurrent cultural narratives—a process clearly evident between 1914 and 1918 and between 1939 and 1945, and conspicuous in ongoing clashes between the Christian West and the Islamic Near and Middle East, to mention just the most obvious examples—inspires willingness to dominate, eliminates eagerness to co-participate, and leads to emerging of the intolerant, fearsome and fearful, neo-colonial modes of perception, often manifested in the form of a condescending victimisation of "terrorist" (West) or "infidel" (East) narratives in the name of dubious resistance, prevention and/or improvement.[17] Given the complexity of modern international affairs, and the level of political, ideological, economic, and military competition, supposed globalisation—with the notable exception of economic relations—still remains illusory, another case of wishful thinking. News may travel fast, but its impact remains questionable. Or so it may presently appear.

In other words it is not easy to imagine people enthusiastically immersing themselves in something as ostensibly uninteresting, or, to some possibly re-

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thereby no longer feel even sorrow before the incommensurability between realities and Ideas, since they will lose their capacity to have Ideas...' Jean-François Lyotard, *The DIFFEREND: Phrases in Dispute*. Translation by Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) 180-181.

[17] 'Here, I use the notion of "neo-colonial" deliberately [as something occurring] AFTER the "post-colonial." In my opinion it is open for discussion whether we have happily left (neo)colonialism behind. Ongoing attempts at imposing the "New World Order" (including ruthless military interventions in the Balkans and Asia [at the turn of the 21st century] seem to indicate otherwise.' Piotr Grella-Możejko, "When the Sun Rises in the West: the Art of Karen Tanaka" in: Janice Brown and Sonja Arntzen (Eds.) *Across Time and Genre: Reading and Writing Japanese Women's Texts* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2002) 69.

volting, as things Polish.[18] But, for the sake of argument, it is worth a try regardless of what one may surmise. So, again, let us now imagine the following situation: A decent, moderately well meaning, intellectually well developed, sensibly attuned to the world (yes, politically correct), person of Western stock and culture, and especially of Anglo-Saxon Protestant stock and culture—it does not matter if of their British or North American varieties—decides to cast eyes on Poland (and why not? Poland is sometimes mentioned in the news after all) to learn something new. Inevitably, such a person will experience emotional confusion somewhat equivalent to a slightly disdainful shock: despite its obvious appeal, the country, or rather its resultant image, its resultant mental projection, *may*, and often *does*, immediately become an illogical, incongruous and totally wanton aberration.

[I.4] Perhaps no other writer has captured this phenomenon better than the Nobel Prize laureate Czesław Miłosz (1911 – 2004), himself a controversial figure, whose bitter (even resentful) and biting irony towards his native (?) country will perhaps be better understood if one, quite legitimately according to some, and quite incorrectly according to others, sees him as a Lithuanian in disguise rather than a Pole (yet another typically Polish paradox).[19] One of the

[18] It remains to be seen whether this very text will ever generate a cult following.

[19] In his Nobel lecture he says: 'My family already in the Sixteenth Century spoke Polish, just as many families in Finland spoke Swedish and in Ireland - English; so I am a Polish, not a Lithuanian, poet. But the landscapes and perhaps the spirits of Lithuania have never abandoned me...' [Quoted in Nobelprize.org,

introductory passages of his excellent, and as for the needs of English-speaking readers, monumental (not to say excessive in its scope), treatise on Polish literature, offers the following characteristic paragraph:

> "[T]he history of Poland and of its literature seems extravagant and full of incongruities: a Slavic nation whose writers, up to the Renaissance, used only Latin; a huge state which, for centuries, stood up to the Teutons, Turkey, and Muscovy but owing to the abuse of its parliamentary system literally fell apart while its once weaker neighbours partitioned it and erased it from the map of Europe for some one hundred and twenty years; an astonishingly vital people who sink easily into moronic apathy and who show their virtues only in circumstances which would crush and destroy any other human group; a refinement of taste, which produced lyrical poetry comparable to that of Elizabethan England, combined with irony and brilliance but always threatened by drunken torpor and parochial numbings; habits of political and religious tolerance, acquired in the multidenominational and multinational *Respublica* headed by an elected king, which gave way, as a result of collective misfortunes, to a wounded, morbid nationalism.... This chaos of elements seemingly so disparate, yet interrelated by logic of their own, may contain some lessons of universal portent."[20]

To many, not just the ambiguously critical Miłosz, this is Poland in a nutshell, a country of contradictions that often defy logic. There exists—likely the most striking of them all—a remarkable iconic representation (visual metaphor) of this, namely Rembrandt van Rijn's 1637 portrait of a Polish nobleman, in which the grandeur and the imposing body of the model, lavishly dressed in a fur-lined coat and fur cap, imperiously rising a gold-inlaid baton (which indi-

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http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1980/milosz-lecture-en.html] This and other similarly, or much more, ambiguous statements provide grounds for questioning, or at least investigating, Miłosz's real ethnic and cultural identity – and his ethnic and cultural sympathies. See: Andrzej Romanowski, "Czy Czesław Miłosz musiał pisać po polsku?" [Did Czesław Miłosz have to write in Polish?], *Apokryf* No 9 (literary supplement) in: *Tygodnik Powszechny* No 26/1996. There the author well summarises controversies surrounding Miłosz, and their provenance. Also: "Grozi nam płaskość i wulgarność" - z Czesławem Miłoszem rozmawia Jerzy Illg [We are threatened by mediocrity and vulgarity – Jerzy Illg in conversation witch Czesław Miłosz], ibidem.

[20] Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, op. cit., xvii.

cates the very high social status of the magnate), harmonise oddly with the contrast offered by the opposition of his cruel lips and a pair of eyes full of curious pain, set in a face whose crumpled and ruddy cheeks suggest chronic alcohol abuse.[21] A mixture of proud benevolence and power – and sadistic vulnerability.

An introduction into Poland's Second Republic history is in place here in order to provide a few examples to support, and to illustrate, Miłosz's statement and prepare the ground for further argument.

[I.5] All in all, and regardless of in which partition zone they travailed, the Poles were able to lay the groundwork, or so they thought, for future reintegration of the nation. That all this effort came practically to naught, and that Poland just accidentally 'happened' as it did as a result of the deadly predicament in which the partitioning powers found themselves in the end – did not really matter. After more than a century of slavery, all aspects of the social code: mental, behavioural (customary), linguistic, economic, legal, cultural, even culinary, exhibited staggering differences and disparities between the three partitioning sectors, or, rather, between three s e p a r a t e Polish societies. Yet, in spite of all these contrasts, the prevailing attitude was that of eagerly yearning for a breakthrough, especially during the Great War. Most fantastical plans were then made and abandoned; wild hopes of certain politi-

[21] The painting is simply called *A Polish Nobleman*. Now in the National Art Gallery in Washington, DC.

cal solutions, created excitement and faded away; fanciful schemes based on bizarre calculations, offered and then withdrawn; dramatic manifestoes, publicised and thrown into wastebaskets. But by 1918, the centripetal societal forces conditioning a positive outcome of the efforts hitherto undertaken gained so much momentum that what may have been seen as a surprise, or a "fluke," was in reality a logical, o b j e c t i v e outcome of the overall situation. Oskar Halecki puts it succinctly: 'The resurrection of the Republic, after more than a hundred years of political non-existence, has been the first act of the still unfinished drama which contemporary Poland is still living through in the full consciousness of its significance and with unshaken faith in its successful resolution.[22] This resurrection was effected in three stages: first, the successive defeat in the war of 1914-1918 of all the partitioning Powers; second, the decisions of the Peace Conference in 1919; third, the complete establishment of the boundaries of the renewed Polish State, which dragged on until 1923.'[23]

The old rulers were tired, their subjects – hungry for change.[24]

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[22] He was first writing this in the early 1940's. First edition of his *A History of Poland* appeared in 1942.

[23] Oskar Halecki, *A History of Poland*. 9th Edition (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1976) 275.

[24] There is much truth in what Norman Davies says – and much lyricism: '[M]any Polish historians have assumed that the rebirth of the Polish state was the natural conclusion of the nation's struggles during the period of Partition. In their view, it formed only the proper, not to say inevitable, destination of 'the Road to Independence'... Yet one cannot assume that the wish was the father of the deed. In actual fact, the Poles were given very little opportunity to fight for their independence. All the enterprises which they undertook in this direction, including the [Piłsudski's] Legions, were defeated. All the plans which were laid for the creation of a Polish state in conjunction with the Central powers, with Russia, or with the Western allies, came to nothing... [T]he wishes and actions of the Polish population were, to the very last moment, largely irrelevant. To at least one sceptical commentator, the creation of independent Poland in 1918 was the result of 'a fluke'. To people of a religious turn of mind, it looked like a

[I.6] By 1921, with the Polish-Soviet war handily won, the new Poland had already solidified its independent existence. Between November 1918, when the process of freeing the country had begun, and 18 March 1921, when the Treatise of Riga was signed, concluding the Polish-Soviet war, with additional territorial acquisitions added following the 3rd Silesian Uprising (2 May – 5 July, 1921), the country took an administrative shape which remained basically unchanged until 1939. More than once during these three decisive years, from 1918 to 1921, did the state find itself on the verge of collapse. Norman Davies provides a truly telling comment on Poland's independence, reflective of what many heads of state, politicians, political theorists and economists thought at the time:

> Molotov called it 'the monstrous bastard of the Peace of Versailles'. Stalin called it 'pardon the expression, a state'. J. M. Keynes, the theorist of modern capitalism, called it 'an economic impossibility whose only industry is Jew-baiting'. Lewis Namier [born Ludwik Niemirowski] called it 'pathological.' E. H. Carr called it 'a farce'. David Lloyd George talked of 'a historic failure', which had 'won her freedom not by her own exertions but by the blood of others', and of a country which 'im-

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miracle.' Davies, op. cit., Vol. II, 392. Davies may be partly right, but the outcome of the process was indeed inevitable, to which the emergence of other new countries in the region somewhat forcefully attests. Lukowski and Zawadzki, while acknowledging the decomposition of the three partitioning powers as a decisive geopolitical factor in Poland's regaining independence, follow the Carlylean model of heroic history by assigning the supreme rôle to Józef Piłsudski's influence and will: 'The three empires that had ruled Poland in 1914 were no more; the unbelievable had happened. But a single Poland still had to be created out of the disparate regions and out of the conflicting political and social forces that were now in the open. Piłsudski's return from German captivity on 10 November provided the catalyst for the dramatic events of the following days. His role proved providential. His legendary exploits as a fighter for national freedom, his left-wing background yet his readiness to rise above party factionalism, and his sixteen-month spell in German captivity had earned him wide support among a population desperate to escape wartime privations yet euphoric about the imminence of independence.' Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*. 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 222.

> posed on other nations the very tyranny' which it had endured itself for years. 'Poland', he said, 'was drunk with the new wine of liberty supplied to her by the Allies', and 'fancied herself as the resistless mistress of Central Europe'. In 1919, Lloyd George was reported as saying that he would no more give Upper Silesia to Poland 'than he would give a clock to a monkey'. In 1939, he announced that Poland had 'deserved its fate'. Adolf Hitler called it 'a state which arose from the blood of countless German regiments', 'a state built on force and governed by the truncheons of the police and the military', 'a ridiculous state where... sadistic beasts give vent to their perverse instincts', 'an artificially begotten state', 'the pet lap-dog of Western democracies which cannot be considered a cultured nation at all', 'a so-called state lacking every national, historical, cultural and moral foundation.[25]

'The coincidence of these sentiments,' Davies continues, 'and of their phraseology, is unmistakable. Rarely, if ever, has a newly independent country been subjected to such eloquent and gratuitous abuse.'[26]

[I.7] Disturbingly unfair though they may seem, such sentiments are easy to understand. The new Poland defied all the negative forecasts and left many hitherto patronising Allied powers wondering how ungrateful the new state was by taking its fate into its own hands and ignoring all the good advice given it. On the opposite point of the spectrum the Germans and the Russians (or, rather, the Soviets) were left beaten, losing big chunks of their pre-war territories to the state they controlled for good two centuries. On the whole, that outcome was particularly hard on Germany, which lost rich lands along its eastern borders, such as Silesia, which she considered her own. The results of the 3rd Silesian Uprising, giving Poland the wealthier part of Upper Silesia, could only

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[25] Norman Davies, op. cit., Vol. II, 393.
[26] Ibidem.

affect the German economy in the most negative way, and not only the economy, but also the nation's sense of pride and justice.

> No feature of the Treaty of Versailles stirred more bitter feelings in Germany than the loss of territory to the new State of Poland... If any country had good reason to fear Germany's [enmity] it was Poland. At the Peace Settlement of 1919, and afterwards when Germany was weak, the Poles had acquired territory, the loss of which was more resented by the Germans than perhaps any other part of the Versailles Settlement. In order to provide Poland with access to the sea, Danzig was separated from Germany and made into a Free City, where the Poles enjoyed special privileges, while East Prussia was divided from the rest of the Reich by the Polish Corridor. There was justice on both sides. Much of the land regained by Poland has been first seized by Prussia at the time of the Partitions, and was inhabited by Poles. But the Poles, especially in Silesia, had in turn taken more than they could legitimately claim.[27]

Such sentiments were shared by many – without and within. Hans Roos well captures these feelings when explaining their origins:

> In accordance with the directions of the Supreme Council, the Treaty of Versailles, signed on 28 June 1919, gave Poland the whole province of Posen [Poznań] and border regions of central Silesia and Pomorze [Pomerania], with an access to the sea to the west of Danzig [Gdańsk]; altogether an area of about 17,000 square miles. In the Prussian census of these provinces in 1910, 1,714.000 persons had given Polish as their mother-tongue, 1,080,000 had given German, 105,000 Kashubian and 9,000 Masurian; 2,017,000 belonged to the Catholic Church and 904,000 to the Evangelical Church. Thus although the majority of the inhabitants regarded themselves as Poles, and although the German section of the population had been enlarged by the families of officers and civil servants and the German colonization policy of 1886-1916, Poland also received areas with exclusively German native populations and individual German colonies. That is why Stanisław Grabski, a leading National Democrat politician, emphasized as early as October 1919 that the 'alien element' in Posen and Pomorze must be reduced from '14 or even 20 per cent to 1½ per cent'. In fact, with the incorporation of the two provinces zone by zone, which began on 10 January 1920, the German population either migrated or was expelled, and finally only

[27] Alan Bullock, *Hitler. A Study in Tyranny* (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1999) 325, 491.

about 355,000 old-established Germans remained in these regions.[28]

The border disputes officially (formally) settled or not, by 1923 Poland found herself firmly on the map of Europe as the sixth largest country, covering an area of 388,600 square kilometres, placing her behind the Soviet Union, Germany, France, Spain, and Sweden.[29] Her extensive borders, which already at the time were promising trouble, were 5,529 kilometres long. In terms of population, Poland was also sixth, behind the Soviet Union, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and Italy.[30] Placed as she was between the grumbling Germany and the humiliated Soviet Union, Poland tried to attain a balance of power on the international scene, although the ruling elites did realise right from the outset the sheer impossibility of maintaining any sort of splendid isolation in the long run.

[I.8] [ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: The wavering borders notwithstanding, the ethnic composition of Poland's society bore the stamp of provisionality about it – sooner or later ethnic tensions were bound to arise, a fact of which the leaders of the nation were uneasily aware. In a time of rampant nationalism Poland found herself a multinational, polycultural state, largely acquired and enlarged

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[28] Hans Roos, *A History of Modern Poland. From the Foundation of the State in the First World War to the Present Day*. Translated from the German by J. R. Foster (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966) 54.

[29] Jan Tomicki, *II Rzeczpospolita. Oczekiwania i rzeczywistość* [The Second Polish Republic. Expectations vs. Reality] (Warszawa: Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1986) 117-118.

[30] Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way: a Thousand-Year History of the Poles and Their Culture*, op. cit., 338-339.

by force, seen by many as a living fossil from another, happier (?) epoch. According to the first National Census conducted in September 1921, the overall number of inhabitants was 27.2 million. Ethnic Poles made up about 18.7 millions of the total number, *i.e.* 69.2 per cent. Then there were ethnic minorities: Ukrainians (over 14 per cent, roughly about four million), Jews (7.8 per cent, *ca.* 2.1 million), Byelorussians (3.9 per cent), Germans (3.8 per cent). There were also Lithuanians, Russians, Czechs, Armenians, even Tartars. Interestingly, over 700 thousand Jews gave their nationality as Polish – bringing their total number to 2,853,318 – a significant, albeit not to be overestimated, change in their attitude towards Polishness when compared to earlier periods.[31] Another National Census of December 1931, whose data are considered more reliable than the ones gathered a decade earlier,[32] indicated population growth of over 4 million. The total number of inhabitants increased to 31.9 million, of which the Ukrainian population reached five million and the Jews over three million. The number of Germans fell to about 740,000, *i.e.* 2.3 per cent of the whole. By the end of the interwar period it is estimated that Poland's population reached 35.1 million of which in 1939 the Jews constituted 3,474,000, about 10 per cent.[33] Other minorities increased by similar numbers. All in all, Poland's population included a very significant number of non-Poles, between one-third

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[31] Peter D. Stachura, *Poland Between the Wars...*, op. cit., 61-62; Jan Tomicki, op. cit., 118.

[32] Jan Tomicki, op. cit., 117-118..

[33] Zbigniew Landau and Jerzy Tomaszewski, *The Polish Economy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 1985) 115.

and, according to some, forty per cent.[34] This ethnic mosaic was much in place in urban areas: in most cities the Jews constituted between 25 and more than 40 per cent of the population. In Warsaw, for instance, there were in 1921 no less than 310,000 Jews, 33.1 per cent; in Łódź every third inhabitant was Jewish; in the Kraków region there were in 1935 as many as 254,304 Jews, 28.6 per cent. The further east one went the larger the percentage of Jews. Some eastern cities and towns (such as Pińsk) were 90 per cent Jewish. The Byelorussians and Ukrainians dominated eastern and south-eastern villages.[35] On the other hand, many Poles remained abroad: 'Over two million Poles were left outside the boundaries of the new state [most of them in the newly-established Soviet Republic].'[36]

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[34] Marian M. Drozdowski, "The National Minorities in Poland in 1918-1939" in: *Acta Poloniæ Historica*, No. 22 (1970) 226-267. Drozdowski gives the number of Poland's pre-1945 Ukrainian population as close to seven million. His findings have been questioned by some contemporary historians such as Peter D. Stachura, yet it is beyond doubt that the Ukrainians were the largest ethnic minority of the Second Republic.

[35] Peter D. Stachura, *Poland Between the Wars...*, op. cit., 62. See also: Julian K. Janczak, "The National Structure of the Population in Łódź in the Years 1820-1939" in: *Polin*, No. 6 (1991) 25; Wiesław Puś, "The Development of the City of Łódź (1820-1939)" in: *Polin*, No. 6 (1991) 16; Edward D. Wynot, *Warsaw Between the World Wars. Profile of a Capital City in a Developing Land 1918-1939* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1983) 106 ff; Jerzy Tomaszewski, *Ojczyzna nie tylko Polaków. Mniejszości narodowe w Polsca w latach 1918-1939* [Motherland of Not Just Poles. Ethnic Minorities in Poland in the Years 1918-1939] (Warszawa: Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1985).

[36] Adam Zamoyski, op. cit., 338. Jerzy Tomaszewski and Zbigniew Landau provide staggering figures indicating the size of the Polish minority in the (former) Soviet Union, and ranging from almost 800 thousand (1926) to 630 thousand (1939), the decrease explained by both ruthless extermination and statistical manipulation by the Soviet authorities (similar manipulations were exercised in regards to the "Soviet" Ukraine). They estimate, quoting the Russian author Nikolai Ivanov, that in 1926 the real number of Poles within the Soviet borders was closer to 1.2 million. See: Jerzy Tomaszewski and Zbigniew Landau, *Polska w Europie i świecie 1918-1939* [Poland in Europe and the World 1918-1939] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO, 2005) 85. They are, however, reluctant to accept fully Mr. Ivanov's findings. It may not be without meaning to say that the 2005 edition of their book is a "revised" edition of the work published before 1989, a mainstay of Communist-era socio-political scholarship. Yet their work, its shortcomings

[I.9] Scholars generally agree that in terms of economy the Second Republic belonged to the group of the lesser developed, or even underdeveloped, European countries of the period. Peasants constituted the majority of the population: in 1921, for instance, 76 per cent of Poland's inhabitants lived in villages,[37] and *ca.* 65 per cent of the rural population lived off the soil (the other *ca.* 11 per cent performing and/or providing administrative, educational and economic services: policemen, teachers, craftsmen, tradespeople, seasonal workers etc.).[38] Among those, the owners of small or very small farmsteads, often existing and working on the threshold of survival, especially in the Eastern Lands – Byelorussia and Ukraine – were a dominant force. As Tomaszewski and Landau duly tell, with a touch of, perhaps unintended, black humour, from that standpoint the pre-1939 Poland must be considered one of Europe's (and the world's) poorer countries, although it was in better shape than some countries in Eu-

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notwithstanding, still impresses with its scope and, more often than not, attention to scholarly detail. Jan Tomicki, op. cit., 118, speaks of about three million Poles living abroad at that time.

[37] The available sources differ slightly in their estimates, but it is acknowledged that if in 1921 Poland's urban population constituted about 24 percent of the whole, then by 1931 that number had risen to 27 percent, and by 1938 to about 30 percent. Janusz Żarnowski, *Społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1918-1939* [The Society of the Second Republic 1918-1939] (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1973) 23.

[38] However, the steady development of larger agglomerations must be kept in mind. If in 1921 Poland had 13 big cities ("big" by the standards of contemporary sociology; a city was considered "big" when its population was 50 thousand and above), then in 1931 there were already 22 such cities, including one city whose population exceeded 1 million (Warszawa), 10 cities with 100 thousand inhabitants each, and three cities whose population was above 75 thousand. See: Henryk Tannenbaum, "Siła atrakcyjna skupień wielkomiejskich w Polsce w latach 1921-1931" [The Attractive Force of Agglomerations in Poland in the Years 1921-1931] in: *Przegląd Socjologiczny* [Sociology Review], 1936, Vol. IV, Tome 1-2, 130-150; Stanisław Rychliński, "Na marginesie sprawy wędrówek do miast" [Notes on the Issue of Urban Migrations] in: *Samorząd Terytorialny* [Territorial Self-government], 1935, Vol. 1/2, 41-60.

rope (such as Albania and several other Balkan states) and colonial territories which belonged to the great powers.[39] Very little to cherish, definitely.

Because of its inherent weaknesses, stemming from political and economic divisions which occurred, and gradually deepened, during the Partitions (1772-1918), as well as from extensive devastation during the Great War (exceptionally severe in the Russian partition),[40] Polish industry also suffered much, above all in times of the Great Depression, which in Poland ended two years later than elsewhere, in 1935. However, it has to be remembered that after 1918 Poland lost, almost irrevocably, the traditional big markets in Germany and Russia, neither state willing to strengthen the new state by strengthening its economy through imports.[41] In the former Austrian partition the circumstances were different, for Austrian Galicia belonged to the poorest regions of the K.u.K. monarchy and played only a small part in the Empire's economy. Its backwardness prevailed throughout the 1918-1939 period (with the exception of the oil industry). These were, again, the poorest voivodeships of the Second Polish Republic [voivodeships (in Polish: *województwa*; singular: *województwo*) are large administrative territorial units in historic and modern Poland and, in the past, several other countries, including Lithuania and Serbia]. At the time of Poland's reunification, the successive governments had to deal with barely credible difficulties of overcoming structural—administrative, material, social

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[39] Jerzy Tomaszewski and Zbigniew Landau, *Polska w Europie i świecie 1918-1939*, op. cit., 41.
[40] Tomicki, op. cit., 121.
[41] Ibidem, 142.

and economic—differences within the state, and carried out reforms akin to surgery performed without any anæsthetic. That in the end, towards the late 1930s, this therapy brought about a degree of stability and progress, will forever remain a testament to perseverance of all the parties, as well as the economic and social forces, involved in the process.

Despite that, when considering the standard data pertaining to industrial growth, Poland still placed well behind many European and world economies. Between 1928 and 1938, the decade first marked by economic boom, then by recession, and then by another revival, the index of Poland's industrial growth was estimated at 6 to 19 per cent, whereas many other countries enjoyed much faster growth: in Latvia 75 per cent, in Greece 65 per cent, in Finland 56 per cent, in Estonia 46 per cent, in Rumania 33 per cent, in Norway 29 per cent, and in Hungary 27 per cent...[42] In the years 1918-1935, when compared to other European and world economies, in Poland the overall tendency was towards gradual impoverishment of the nation.[43] One of the main reasons for this was a very weak connection between industry and agriculture. In crudest terms, most peasants could not afford to buy heavier agricultural machinery (or any machinery at all), fertilisers and the like. Over the course of time, in some regions, mainly in the east and south-east, they even returned to natural economy[44] and barter of the most basic agricultural goods. The result was a gradual

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[42] Jerzy Tomaszewski and Zbigniew Landau, *Polska w Europie i świecie 1918-1939*, op. cit., 145
[43] Ibidem, 148.
[44] Ibidem, 141.

shrinking of the internal market for industrial products.[45] This situation began to change for the better around 1936-1939, when a new economic policy was introduced, devised by the talented minister Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski (1888 – 1974) and characterised by high degree of state interventionism. This radical policy was considered necessary because, as Tomaszewski and Landau correctly indicate, foreign capital in Poland avoided investing and centred its goals on revenue (wealth) transfer to its countries of origin (in most cases: France, Italy, Sweden; to some extent Germany). At the same time, domestic capital was too frail to take any significant part in rebuilding and developing the economy.[46]

[I.10] An assessment of the Second Republic, though it may never be complete, cannot do without at least a quick glance at the state's policy regarding its literary culture and educational system (always representative components of any mature, advanced culture seen as a whole), whose quantitative and qualitative boundaries help define the given society. It has to be admitted that in this area, the condition of literacy and its corollaries, *i.e.* readership and its social structure, production of books and other printing materials available to the public, cultural investments and the like, reflected the specific social structure of the people as well as the society's economic conditions in all their manifestations.

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[45] Ibidem, 140.
[46] Ibidem, 128-150.

[ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: One aspect is very important here, namely the presence of active ethnic minorities, each of which had eventually developed its own literary culture within the larger framework of the poly-cultural state (not yet multicultural in the modern sense of the word, reflecting coexistence based on mutual toleration instead of aggressive competition and cultural domineering). These ethnic minorities, particularly the Jews, Ukrainians and Germans, had managed to develop their own individual and regional literary cultures, often detached from and ignoring the central and local Polish governments' attempts at subjecting them to a Polish cultural (and political!) *raison d'être*.]

According do the notable Marxist literary scholar, Stefan Żółkiewski, Polish intelligentsia, obviously the traditional supplier and consumer of cultural goods, was by no means numerous between the World Wars.[47] Janusz Żarnowski estimates that only about 6 per cent of the entire population, in the 1930s under 2 million, belonged to that group (or class) in which the Poles and polonised representatives of Poland's ethnic minorities (such as the polonised Jewish intelligentsia whose members considered themselves Poles and identified themselves with Polish culture) formed a 'disproportionally large part' – a result of persistent nationalistic policy.[48] Of these less than two million people

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[47] Stefan Żółkiewski, "Główne tendencje rozwoju polskiej kultury literackiej" [Main Tendencies in Development of Polish Literary Culture] in: Jerzy Kądziela, Jerzy Kwiatkowski, Irena Wyczańska (Eds.). *Literatura polska w okresie międzywojennym* [Polish Literature Between the Wars] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979) 14-15.

[48] Janusz Żarnowski, *Struktura społeczna inteligencji w Polsce w latach 1918-1939* [The Social Structure of Polish Intelligentsia in the Years 1918-1939] (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1964) 169-177. See also: Janusz Żarnowski, *Społeczeństwo Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej 1918-1939*, op. cit., 332.

only—or 'at least' as Żółkiewski puts it—one third read books [on a regular basis]: between 700 and 750 thousand.[49] The same author calculates approximately that the sphere of literary culture in Poland before 1939 "embraced" (or, rather, attracted) between 7 and 10 per cent of the adult population, a very unimpressive figure when compared to the level of literary awareness in the United Kingdom and other well developed countries of that period.[50] For instance, by 1910, in England most citizens regularly read weekly press, by 1914-1918, daily press, and by 1950, books. The network of bookstores and libraries developed along similar ways: by 1911 almost 63 per cent of the people had access to these facilities, and by 1926, over 96 per cent![51] In contrast, in Poland in the late 1920s, a period of relative prosperity before the crash of 1929, and then in the late 1930s, when the economic conditions improved again, the number of people who read newspapers and other periodicals, Andrzej Paczkowski estimates, ranged between 1.5 million (those who read daily press regularly) to 2.9 million (those who read daily press at least once a week). To that select group belonged only 10-13 per cent of the peasant population (owners of the larger and more prosperous farmsteads; active, or radical, peasant youth,[52] be it rightist or leftist, involved in political or religious activities), and about 74 per cent of the working class population, 44 per cent of whom could but afford to buy a

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[49] Stefan Żółkiewski, op. cit., 15, 47.

[50] Stefan Żółkiewski, op. cit., 14.

[51] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961) 166-171; eadem, *Communications* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1968) 26.-30.

[52] Stefan Żółkiewski, op. cit., 31-34, 48

newspaper once or twice a week (here again political organisations of the Left contributed to facilitating distribution of the printed word).[53] Despite the 30 per cent increase in numbers between 1932 and 1939, public libraries (in 1932 there were 8526 of them, 6289 targeting Polish readers, the remaining 2237 geared towards the literary needs of ethnic minorities) only served about 600 thousand readers altogether.[54] Also, since Polish language-based publications such as newspapers and specialised periodicals dominated the market, in certain areas such as the Polesie (in Belarusian: Палесьсе), Wołyń (in Ukrainian: Волинь) and Stanisławów[55] voivodeships, where in some rural areas less than 2.5 per cent of the residents spoke Polish, major sectors of the populace did not have access to any printed media, notwithstanding the inhabitants' extremely low level of education, extreme poverty and, last but not least, their customary extreme distrust of Polish intentions.[56]

However, when dealing with the issue of Poland's literary culture during the interwar period, one ought to keep in mind that right upon her rebirth, the young republic inherited the disease which had already crippled big sectors of the society during the partitions: illiteracy. On average, in the former Austrian

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[53] Andrzej Paczkowski, *Prasa Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* [Press in the Second Republic] (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1971) 22-27; eadem, *Prasa polska 1918 – 1939* [Polish Press 1918-1939] (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1980) 20-33; Stefan Żółkiewski, op. cit., 33.

[54] Stefan Żółkiewski, *Kultura literacka (1918-1932)* [Literary Culture (1918-1932)] (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1973) 343-344, 403-406.

[55] The city of Stanisławów is presently called Ivano-Frankivsk (Івано-Франківськ). The ethnic structure of the Stanisławów voivodeship was as follows: Ukrainians 68 percent, Poles 23 percent, Jews 7 percent, Germans, Armenians and others 2 percent.

[56] Andrzej Paczkowski, *Prasa polska 1918 – 1939*, op. cit., 20.

partition of Galicia, 40 per cent of the population were illiterate; in the former Russian partition, 55 per cent; and, for obvious reasons, in the former German partition and Silesia, only 2 per cent. In some regions such as Polesie, the rate of illiteracy reached almost 80 per cent! No wonder the new state set schooling as one of top priorities. It must be unequivocally said that, in spite of serious obstacles, primarily economic and organisational in nature, this energetic policy brought about much success and laid the foundations for further positive developments, as already by the 1925/26 school year, 86 per cent of children attended (primary) schools, and in the school year 1928/29, 96.4 per cent.[57] If in the area of secondary education certain regressive trends were visible—in 1926/27 there were 796 secondary schools, of which 107 served the minorities, in the early 1930s the number of such schools shrank to 748 (the student body decreased as well)[58]—then the postsecondary institutions grew in numbers: in 1918 there were 18 such academic institutions, both state- (13) and privately owned (5), and in 1938/39 already 28, serving 50 thousand students.[59] By any stretch of the imagination these were not contemptible achievements.

[I.11] Unfortunately, these achievements were, from the point of view of impar-

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[57] Stefan Żółkiewski, op. cit., 27-29. Unfortunately, among the older groups of the society the average illiteracy ratio of 20 percent persisted until the end of the Second Republic. Ibidem.

[58] Ibidem, 28. See also: Anna Szczepan-Wojnarska: "Kultura, nauka, oświata" [Culture, Science, Education) in: Anna Skoczek (Ed.), *Historia literatury polskiej. Dwudziestolecie międzywojenne* [The History of Polish Literature. The Interwar Period], Vol. VIII (Bochnia, Kraków, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SMS, 2006) 45 ff.

[59] Anna Szczepan-Wojnarska, op. cit., 50-51. These figures do not include religious institutions of higher learning such as seminaries (Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Mariavite) and rabbinical schools. Ibidem, 51.

tial historians, belittled by the officially imposed educational policies which targeted Poland's minorities, especially the Jews and the Ukrainians. Throughout the 1930's, one could witness a stiffening attitude towards students representing non-ethnic citizens of the Second Republic (here, it is assumed for the sake of the argument that all inhabitants of the pre-World War II Poland were considered her citizens, regardless of their ethnic and cultural origin). This tendency was particularly visible and acutely felt in relation to Jewish university students. The Jews, as always energetic and hungry for improvement of their lot within the society, provided a "disproportionately" large percentage of the university student population. Under the influence of the extreme right, the Polish government wavered and finally gave in. The infamous *numerus clausus*—limiting the number of Jewish university students in accordance with the demographic proportions within the population (and there were suggestions of introducing *numerus nullus*, doing away with the Jews altogether!)—will forever remain a stain on the otherwise honest and impressive efforts of the Polish educational administration to provide for the well-being of the post-secondary schooling system in the Second Republic. It goes without saying that in a truly suicidal move, several large Polish professional organisations, doctors, lawyers, architects, expelled the Jews from their ranks.

Still, the Jews contributed incalculably to the development of P o l i s h culture (in its Polish language-based Judeo-Polish variety), such as those, randomly chosen, active in the 20th Century alone (which witnessed extraordinary

qualitative and quantitative growth of the Polish-Jewish cross-cultural contribution and exchange), and whose careers often throve during the Second Polish Republic: critics, poets and writers (writing in Polish, not Yiddish or Hebrew), coming largely from the assimilated Jewish families, Jan Brzechwa[60] (1898 – 1966), Bruno Jasieński[61] (1901 – 1938), Bolesław Leśmian[62] (1877 – 1937, cousin of Jan Brzechwa), the abovementioned Artur Sandauer (1913 – 1989, married to Erna Rosenstein, see below), Bruno Schulz (1892 – 1942), Antoni Słonimski (1895 – 1976), Anatol Stern (1899 – 1968), Julian Tuwim (1894 – 1953), Aleksander Wat[63] (1900 – 1967), Adam Ważyk[64] (1905 – 1982, brother of Leon Trystan, see below), and Józef Wittlin (1896 – 1976); film and theatre directors Józef Lejtes[65] (1901 – 1983), Arnold Szyfman (1882 – 1967), and Leon Trystan[66] (1899 – 1941); musicians Józef Koffler (composer, 1896 – 1943/44?), Leopold Münzer (pianist, *ca.* 1900 – 1944?), and Aleksander Tansman (composer, 1897 – 1986); painters Erna Rosenstein (1913 – 2004), Zygmunt Menkes (1896 – 1986), and Jonasz Stern (1904 – 1988).

Sadly, the Ukrainian and Byelorussian populations were often treated with even more contempt than the Jews, in the end leading to the absolutely un-

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[60] Born Jan Wiktor Lesman.
[61] Born Wiktor Zysman.
[62] Born Bolesław Lesman.
[63] Born Aleksander Chwat.
[64] Born Adam Wagman.
[65] Often referred to as Poland's most accomplished director before World War II. After the war, he emigrated to Israel and then to the US where he worked in the TV medium. Died in Los Angeles.
[66] Born Chaim Lejb Wagman.

necessary estrangement and just resentments which came to the fore in the hour of need, World War II.[67]

[I.12] Norman Davies, not to mention several other influential historians, has few encouraging words about the Second Polish Republic, finishing his description and analysis of it in one telling sentence: 'The Second Republic was indeed destined for destruction.'[68] This somewhat gullible view has been successfully challenged by those historians who do not perceive past history as implicating the inevitable. Says the UK-based Polish scholar, Peter Stachura:

> Davies' brilliant if sometimes provocative works illuminate important aspects of [the pre-1939 Poland's] development, though his generally pessimistic assessment of the Second Republic is disappointing... What is invariably missing from these and other accounts is sufficient recognition of the Second Republic's achievements, which arguably extended well beyond the cultural and educational spheres. In addition to the valiant struggle to secure its borders and the momentous victory over the Soviet Bolsheviks in 1920, the promotion of integration and national integration, at least among the ethnic Poles, the creation of a progressive welfare system, the emphasis placed on family values and civility, the respect fostered for religion and religious institutions, and the relatively low incidence of serious crime are only a few of the usually unacknowledged or underestimated factors which went into the making of the fabric of and integrity of Polish society and the state in these years. It is easy enough to be critical of Poland's transparent failings, but this has surely to be counterbalanced with reference to its many undeniable successes. With Warsaw taking its place as a leading European capital city, boasting a restored Royal Castle as a unifying patriotic symbol, the country often exuded a new mood of confidence and vitality, wrapped in an inimitable Polish sense of style. In the space of a single generation Poland overcame the disaster of partition and many of her most challenging domestic and external problems to re-emerge

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[67] Polish scholarship on Ukrainian (or Byelorussian) cultural contribution during the Second Republic amounts practically to nothing. There exist extremely few sources which would allow for making a more substantial generalisation.

[68] Norman Davies, op. cit., Vol. II, 434.

as an important, justifiably proud nation at the heart of European affairs.[69]

No matter what any scholar of any orientation and preoccupied with Poland's history between 1918 and 1939 may say, the Second Republic should be looked at as a colourful, fascinating polity, an old-fashioned work of art (in Burckhardt's terminology),[70] an intriguing mosaic, a state restored to life by very highly intelligent, educated and, more importantly, sober, ruthless, artful and idealistic (typical Polish concoction), women and men who, to put it in the simplest terms, stepped down from pages written by Polish Renaissance thinkers, Romantics and Positivists to satisfy their own youthful yearnings – and their own mature vanities. No other state can really claim to be brought back from the dead in such a complex, impossible, yet efficient, way. That their vision failed in the end was not due to their obvious shortcomings (what political entity has not experienced these; imperial Rome, Byzantium and Soviet Russia being the most manifest examples?), but to accidentally arrived-at power configurations, whose eventual impact has proven equally illusory after less than fifty years (1945 – 1989).[71]

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[69] Peter Stachura, *Poland Between the Wars...*, op. cit., 7.

[70] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Renaissance in Italy*. Authorized translation by S. G. C. Middlemore (Old Saybrook: Konecky & Konecky, n.d. [2003]).

[71] The emergence of the independent Ukraine and, to a lesser extent, Byelorussia prove the point.

II. Tadeusz Peiper: Biographical and Intellectual Contexts

> We are living it out in an epoch which cannot be compared to any other in the history of Poland; nothing in our annals can be weighted against overcoming the Partitions; once only the feet of time pass by such a moment... We are living it out in an epoch which cannot be compared to any other. And it is us, us who will answer for it in the future... To history the face of our time will be the face we have given it.
>
> Tadeusz Peiper[1]

> *My first volume... Bah! My first volume of poetry never saw the light of day – and never will.*
>
> Tadeusz Peiper[2]

[II.1] Tadeusz Peiper was born in the township of Podgórze near Kraków (Cracow) on 3 May 1891. The house, where he was born and lived until 1906, situated by the town's main square (or, rather, triangular) market place, laid out back in the 18th Century – this house still stands. Named after the high-relief on its corner pediment, the house is known as "Pod Jeleniami" [Under the Stags]. In those days Podgórze, whose population passed over fifteen thousand at the turn of the 20th Century, was a separate municipality, which would not be incorporated into the greater Kraków until 1915. Presently, it is one of Kraków's quieter and more picturesque suburbs, with the neo-Gothic Church of St. Joseph, erected between 1905 and 1909, dominating the skyline. During the Second World War, it was in Podgórze where the co-called Kraków Ghetto (also known as the Podgórze Ghetto) was in operation between 1941 and 1943.[3]

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[1] Tadeusz Peiper, Chapter III, „Nowe tworzenie" [New Ways of Writing] in: *Tędy. Nowe usta* [This Way. The New Lips] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1972) 364. [All translations by P. G-M unless indicated otherwise.]

[2] "Przedmowa" [Foreword] to Poematy [Poems], 1935. Quoted in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *Poematy i utwory teatralne* [Poems and Theatrical Works] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979) 25.

[3] Roman Polański, *Roman by Polanski* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1984).

The town had a sizeable Jewish population (though far smaller than the traditionally Jewish district of Kazimierz, the famous *Oppidum Judæorum*, whence most of the Kraków Jews were relocated to the Podgórze Ghetto).[4] Movie audiences around the world probably do not realise how familiar they may be with Podgórze – substantial segments of Steven Spielberg's 1993 Academy Award-winning Holocaust motion picture *Schindler's List* were filmed there. Today, apart from a fragment of the wall, which during the Second World War separated the Ghetto from the rest of the town, and a commemorative tablet, very little remains of that inexpressible period. The Nazis did not leave a stone unturned, they did not even spare the Jewish cemeteries, using shattered gravestones, many of superb artistic quality and value, to lay roadbeds, carefully examining the exposed skulls for traces of gold and silver...[5] The solitary Jewish gravestone left intact is a testament to these crimes. Also, the Oskar Schindler factory at the Lipowa [Linden] street, No. 4, has remained and attracts considerable attention.

His parents gave the future poet the names Jan Tadeusz. He never used the former except for two of his preferred *noms de plume*, Jan Alden and Jan Badyński.[6] According to contemporary custom, at their baptism many children were given their first names after those of the most popular saints, such as

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[4] Before 1939 the Jews constituted no less than 25 percent of Kraków's population.

[5] Aleksander Bieberstein, *Zagłada Żydów w Krakowie* [The Holocaust in Kraków] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1986); Katarzyna Zimmerer, *Zamordowany Świat. Losy Żydów w Krakowie 1939-1945* [The Murdered World. The Fate of the Jews in Kraków 1939-1945] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2004).

[6] The third and fourth were, respectively, Marian Bielski and Wojciech Dugiel.

Maria, Magdalena, Stanisława or Stanisław (Poland's patron saint), Jan (after St. John the Baptist) and so on. However, quite frequently those official names were not the ones by which their bearers were addressed – very often people preferred to use their second or even third given names on an everyday basis. And hence Peiper's preference for his second given name. That name was bestowed upon him in honour of Tadeusz Kościuszko, the Supreme Commander of the 1794 anti-Russian insurrection, referred to by the Polish historiography as the Kościuszko Insurrection. Considering the date of the Peiper child's birth, it was a fitting name to choose. Apparently, Peiper later savoured telling his interlocutors that on that day church bells rang throughout the city, its citizens celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the seminal May 3 Constitution.[7]

The Peipers were an old, patriotic, middle-class Jewish family of upwardly mobile status, settled in Poland for generations. Soon after the time Tadeusz was born, they converted to Roman Catholicism. The decision had practicality written all over it, the family's traditional patriotic stance notwithstanding. Some Jews were converting at the time, willing to break with the ballast of Jewish Orthodoxy and to find more room to manoeuvre within the dynamically developing Polish capitalist society. It cannot be denied, of course, that oftentimes conversions were inspired by fears of anti-Semitism, especially pronounced in the Russian Partition, where in the later part of the 19th Century

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[7] See: Stanisław Jaworski, *U podstaw awangardy. Tadeusz Peiper – pisarz i teoretyk* [At the Foundations of the Avant-garde. Tadeusz Peiper – Writer and Theoretician] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1980) 9 ff.

and especially after the Revolution of 1905, the arrival of the predominantly Russian-speaking Jews escaping the pogroms in Russia proper resulted in a dramatic increase of tension between the Polish and Jewish sectors of the population (the new arrivals totally immune to the values established by the age-long tradition of Polish-Jewish relations within the once independent Respublica). Many others, Róża (Rosa) Luksemburg (1871 – 1919) being one of the most notable examples, abandoned the faith of their ancestors to follow the radical left-wing orientation, very popular among the Jews attracted by its supranational character. According to Norman Davies:

> The disturbances [in Russia]... aggravated the problems of Polish Jewry in a very specific manner... As a result of the pogroms, considerable numbers of Jews from the Russian areas of the Pale sought refuge in the Polish *gubernias*, or in Galicia. The newcomers... differed from the native Jews in two important respects. In the first place, embittered by their humiliating experiences, they contained an unusually large element of political militants. In the second place, the educated people among them were largely Russian-speaking, and as such essentially indifferent to Polish interests. Their arrival proved unsettling in the extreme, and was resented no less by the leaders of Orthodox Polish Jewry than by the Polish Catholics. Their influx seriously damaged the Polish Orientation, hindered the process of assimilation into Polish culture, and accelerated a wide variety of radical political programmes... [M]any stayed behind to take conspicuous part in the socialist, communist, and Zionist movements. In Polish eyes, these 'alien Jews' were largely responsible for disrupting the supposed harmony of earlier Polish-Jewish relations. Unwittingly, they certainly did much to launch the popular stereotype of the '*żydo-komuna*' [Communist Jewry], associating Marxism and Communism with Russian Jewish intellectuals, which was destined to enjoy a long currency in Poland.[8]

Artur Sandauer (1913 – 1989), a Jew and one of the most outstanding Polish literary critics, who habitually analysed literary phenomena from within the lar-

[8] Davies, *God's Playground. A History of Poland*, op. cit., Vol. II, 251-252.

ger context of social processes (the lesson of Marxism was an important one to him, albeit not the only one), says that in Poland at the turn of the 20th Century, the Jews found themselves in a peculiar position, neither an entirely alien nation, nor a class which would enjoy equal rights. As such, suspended so to speak in the no-man's-land wherein overlap the semiotic fields delineated (signified) by signs such as "nation," "ethnic minority," "class," they epitomised the dangerous and naturally feared otherness and were on a bad footing with all: with the peasants who looked at them as greedy publicans; with the proletariat who perceived them as insatiable factory owners and grafters; with the landowners who saw them as sneaky and avaricious suppliers (of goods necessary to sustain agricultural production); and, most importantly, with the developing native bourgeoisie, who encountered them already well entrenched, often dominant, in the cities.[9] It is to that multilayered and multifaceted social pressure, Sandauer suggests, that many Jews responded either 1) by becoming radicalised and joining the Zionist or socialist movements, often going abroad, or 2) by opting for assimilation.[10] 'A Jew had two ways to get out of the ghetto: the more difficult one, *i.e.* to emigrate; and the easier one, *i.e.* to assimilate. When I say "easier" I have in mind the situation before the First World War, when even the nationalists were looking for allies to support the Polish cause.

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[9] Artur Sandauer, *O sytuacji pisarza polskiego pochodzenia żydowskiego w XX wieku. (Rzecz, którą nie ja powinienem był napisać...)* [On the Situation of a Polish Writer of Jewish Descent in the 20th-Century. (The Thing Not I Should Have Written...)] (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1982) 17.

[10] Ibidem, 18-21. See also: Chaim Loew, *Smok w słowiczym gnieździe* [The Dragon in the Nightingale's Nest] (Warszawa, 1934); eadem, "Żydzi w poezji Odrodzonej Polski" [Jews in Poetry of Poland Reborn] in: *Miesięcznik Żydowski*, 1934, Vol. I, No. 1.

When Poland gained independence, the recent allies became expendable, nay!, they became dangerous as competitors."[11] On the other hand, one can observe mechanisms of rejection pulling in the opposite direction, Polish anti-Semitism coming into collision with Jewish anti-Polonism. Quoting the official statistics based on the Russian census of 1897, G. E. Slocombe demonstrates that very few Jews actually identified themselves as belonging to the Polish nation. For instance, in the Russian Partition the census, based on religion and declared national identity, listed 9,001,349 Roman Catholics considering themselves as Polish adherents. This group also included 73,033 Mariavites, 63,000 Protestants (out of a total number of 634,649), and only 50,000 Jews (out of a total number of 1,747,655), *i.e.* less than 3 percent.[12] Peter Stachura, albeit speaking of the post-1918 Poland, elucidates the Sandauer and Slocombe contrasting points further:

> The approximately 3,500.000 Jews by the mid-1930s, representing just over 10 per cent of the total population of Poland, were a richly heterogeneous community in religious, social, economic, political and ideological respects. There were Orthodox and secular Jews, upper-class and proletarian Jews, wealthy and poor Jews, and conservative and radical Jews, with a plethora of sub-strata in all these broad categories. Their political parties ranged from the *Agudath Yisroel*, which was conservative, Orthodox and patriotically supportive of Poland, to the various Zionists, and then to the Marxist-inclined Bund. Jewish backing for Communism was also not unimportant. Collectively, however, the Jews shared several features.
>
> First, they were overwhelmingly unassimilated: at most only about 8 per cent spoke and regarded themselves as 'Polish', while the rest kept themselves apart from Polish society as much as possible and spoke Yiddish or, much less often, Hebrew. Second, they were urban-

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[11] Ibidem, 21.

[12] G. E. Slocombe, *Poland* (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, Limited; New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1916) 303.

based, with major cities such as Warsaw, Kraków, Łódź, Wilno and Lwów having between 25 and 40 per cent of their inhabitants Jewish, while in small towns (*Shtetlekh*), especially those in the Eastern Provinces, the percentage could be as high as 90. Third, their economic activity was concentrated in the small artisan trades, finance, banking and insurance, and in some liberal professions, notably medicine, publishing and the law. Fourth, they enjoyed, as an overall average, a higher per capita income and thus paid proportionately more taxes then ethnic Polès. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, they had opposed through a well-organised lobby at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 the re-creation of an independent Polish state...

A large majority of the Jews who subsequently and unwillingly found themselves in the Polish State after 1919 maintained a hostile or at best a negligent, apathetic attitude thereafter.[13]

[II.2] Regardless of these pertinent (chronic) conflicts, which were developing along ethnic, social, cultural, religious, political and ideological lines, relatively speaking many Jews who lived in Poland still elected to follow the course of assimilation. They considered Poland to be their native land and were both strongly attached to it and attracted by its social fabric's numerous positives. And again, it was much easier to live without too pronounced communal and cultural pressures. As already observed, some Jewish families, mainly from the upper and middle classes, chose the second option given in Sandauer's narrative. The Peipers were one such family.

[Interestingly, Peiper was not destined to suffer for his Jewishness as much as many other Jewish-Polish artists did during the Second Republic. Most likely, in the course of time and progress of his career he did not turn out to be as "dangerous" and "destructive" as many of his more famous colleagues. This,

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[13] Peter Stachura, *Poland, 1918-1945. An interpretive and Documentary history of the Second Republic* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), op. cit., 84-85.

of course, is a paradox as, generally, the avant-garde had been deemed destructive and negatively influential. Yet Peiper's family history and reputation, commitment to Polish values and, last but not least, his past involvement with several Polish irredentist organisations may have justified his Polishness and spared him the rage of the aggressive nationalists, whose campaign of hate culminated on 16 December 1922 in the cold-blooded killing of Gabriel Narutowicz, Poland's first democratically elected President who happened to be of Jewish descent. Later on, in 1923, Peiper was to show his remarkable impartiality and objectivity by reviewing positively a book written by Narutowicz's murderer, the fanatical right winger and extremely chauvinistic nationalist Eligiusz Niewiadomski (b. 1869, executed 31 January 1923) who, ironically maybe, was a noted artist, theorist and reformer of cultural life before the war. (The book was, in fact, important.)[14] Several nationalistic attacks based on his ethnicity were directed at Peiper, but certainly not reaching the same heated frenzy as was the case of, say, the Skamandrite poets Julian Tuwim or Antoni Słonimski who, luckily for them, were nonetheless protected by many high-ranking officials in the government – and their friends. It is a well known fact that in 1921, Tuwim and Słonimski's fellow Skamandrite, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, slapped the critic Stanisław Pieńkowski in the face after the latter's xenophobic and particularly distasteful attack on the Jewish members of the group. Public

[14] Tadeusz Peiper, „Eligiusz Niewiadomski: „Wiedza o sztuce"" [Eligiusz Niewiadomski: Introduction to Art]. The review was published in the June 1923 issue of *Zwrotnica*. Reprinted in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś* [Of Everything and More] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1974) 151.

opinion criticised the form of, yet unanimously justified and approved the reasons for, Jarosław's Iwaszkiewicz's reaction.][15]

Tadeusz's father, Dr Abraham Marek Peiper,[16] was a popular, well-liked man and successful counsellor-at-law, who also sat on the Podgórze Town Council, at one point in the capacity of Deputy Mayor. Born in 1858, he died of pulmonary tuberculosis (then known as consumption) in 1903, when the little Tadeusz was barely ten. His mother, Maria Elżbieta,[17] née Sara Eisen (1° voto Tarlińska, 2° voto Peiper, 3° voto Schulz), born in 1859, was a formidable woman. She outlived three husbands (divorces were not as common, and not as easy to obtain, as they are today), of whom Dr Marek Peiper was the second, (the third a Czech officer in the Austro-Hungarian army, Otto Schulz). At Elżbieta's death in 1927, aged 68, the family discovered a packet of love letters, sent to her recently by another suitor, passionately in love.[18] It was she who, through shrewd investments in real estate as well as clever and lucky real estate market speculations, laid the foundations for the family's modest affluence.

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[15] Grzegorz Sobaszek and Maciej Tramer, "Krytyk napadł na pisarza" [Critic Attacked a Writer] in *Dziennik* No. 165, 30 October 2006.

[16] He never used his first given name and was always known as Marek.

[17] Known as Elżbieta.

[18] Some lesser known facts regarding the Peiper family were provided by my ex-spouse, Ms. Kasia Zoledziowski, based in Edmonton, Canada, and her elder sister, Ms. Jagoda Żołędziowska, based in Warsaw, close relatives of Tadeusz Peiper, both of whom knew him in person (he was their uncle). Other sources include various publications, all of them quoted in the text, namely memoirs of those who knew Peiper during his Kraków days as well as several biographical sources such as: Stanisław Jaworski, "Nota biograficzna" [Biographical Note] in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *Tędy. Nowe usta* [This Way. The New Lips] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1972) 418-423; Irena Maciejewska (Ed.), *Poeci dwudziestolecia międzywojennego* [Poets of the Interwar] (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1982) 57-58; Piotr Kuncewicz, *Leksykon polskich pisarzy współczesnych* [The Lexicon of Contemporary Polish Writers], Vol. II N-Ż (Warszawa: GRAF-PUNKT, 1995) 96-99.

She was particularly successful in purchasing run-down buildings, fixing them up and then selling. In the end, thanks to her energy, the family owned a number of tenement houses: one in Kraków, which after the Second World War was confiscated by the Communist administration and not returned to the family until 2001 after a costly legal battle; and two in Berlin. Later, in the late 1920's and the early 1930's, Tadeusz Peiper would often visit the German capital to look after family's property and settle some legal disputes related to running it.[19] This is when he began to suffer financially, for the Nazi government imposed restrictions on German (Reichsmark) currency-transfers abroad as one way to fight recession – Peiper could no longer receive his rent directly from Germany. It was a stroke of luck that after the Second World War the Berlin buildings remained in the western portion of the city. Subsequently, the sale of these tenements temporarily helped the family to cope with economic hardships in Communist Poland (unlike its Polish counterpart, the West German government did honour pre-war property laws and restitution rights). Financially independent though Peiper (barely) was, he was clearly quite familiar with the humbler side of life. Jan Brzękowski (1903 – 1983) informs that Peiper was often practically destitute—which during the first few years after 1918, and then during the post-1929 Great Depression, exceptionally hard in Poland, was entirely understandable—yet would never ignore a call for help: 'At that time

[19] Tadeusz Kłak (Ed.), *Materiały do dziejów awangardy* [Archival Materials on the History of the Avant-garde] (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdański: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1975) 86.

[when Brzękowski first met Peiper] he was in dire straits – not always could he find enough in his pocketbook to pay for a most frugal dinner. In spite of that he never hesitated for one moment to help the needy. By the same token, whenever he saw a beggar in the street, he would stop and, sometimes for a long while, ferret in his wallet or pockets for change in order to give such a person whatever he could afford. He always did that, even when he was almost penniless.'[20] Jalu Kurek (1904 – 1983), along with Peiper, Brzękowski and Julian Przyboś (1901 – 1970) one of the four main (founding) members of the Kraków Avant-garde, confirms: 'The author of *The New Lips* [Nowe usta] came from a Kraków family. His brother, Wiktor, was a well known attorney who shook his head in disbelief yet always indulged Tadeusz's ambitions. The latter, a co-owner of an apartment house,[21] wasted his substance on literary pursuits, but this is, I think, yet another reason to respect him: instead of drinking, gambling, or living in quiet comfort, the money was spent on a noble passion.'[22] It seems that recurring financial setbacks, and legal problems related to these, were a normal state of affairs in Peiper's life. Slightly more than a year before

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[20] Jan Brzękowski, *W Krakowie i w Paryżu* [In Kraków and Paris] (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1968) 32.

[21] Co-owned with the Tarliński family, descendants of Elżbieta Peiper's first husband. What share of the income Tadeusz Peiper received is not fully known. Probably around 33 percent, most likely much less, as he lived there in a very small bachelor apartment. Stanisław Jaworski says ("Nota biograficzna," op. cit., 419) that after Peiper's mother's death, the entire building was inherited by the Tarlińskis and that Peiper still kept his small place, free of rent. This statement needs clarification. When the building was finally returned to the Elżbieta Peiper's descendants (all in all several different families were involved) and then sold by them, the share of the 2002 sale which went to her second husband's, Marek Peiper's, descendants was 22 percent.

[22] Jalu Kurek, *Mój Kraków* [My Cracow] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1978) 122.

the outbreak of the Second World War, in an interview published on 19 June 1938 in *Krakowski Kurier Wieczorny* [The Kraków Evening Courier], No. 163, and then reprinted on the morning of 20 June in *Krakowski Kurier Poranny* [The Kraków Morning Courier],[23] No. 164, when asked about his current preoccupations—and the question's implied reference was to the interviewee's literary work—Peiper dramatically began with a complaint ('I was brought to bay') about his unreliable and careless lawyer who created a mess while conducting Peiper's inheritance business. Further on in the same interview, he again brooded over not being able to devote his time entirely to literature because of the ongoing legal dispute. Also, he pointed out how little money there was in literary work: 'What I earned through my books was never enough to sustain me even on the most modest level.'[24]

Tadeusz had three siblings. The abovementioned elder brother, Wiktor Peiper (1885-1930, died of the same disease as his father), who as an attorney continued the family tradition; and sister Maria Ludwika Wanda Peiper (d. 1979),[25] were Elżbieta and Marek's children -- whereas the eldest brother, Dr Zygmunt Tarliński (1880 – 1942), in his mature years on the faculty of the City

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[23] The *Krakowski Kurier Wieczorny* and *Krakowski Kurier Poranny* were two editions of the same high-circulation newspaper.

[24] Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś*, op. cit., 483-484, 603.

[25] Known as Wanda Dzius. On 20 October 1912, she married Ludwik Dzius (1888-1960), who later gained high reputation as a doctor. Wanda, another striking Peiper woman who in her forties could draw to distraction men half her age, was adamant about hiding her actual date of birth. The one given by Stanisław Jaworski in *Tędy. Nowe usta* on page 430 as 1893 is undoubtedly correct yet, in accordance with her wish, on Wanda's tombstone only the date of her death is given.

Commerce School [Miejska Szkoła Handlowa], was born during Elżbieta's first marriage to a Polish engineer.

[II.3] Tadeusz Peiper spent the years between 1901 and 1906 at the gymnasium in his hometown, where he belonged to the most accomplished and highly awarded students, receiving maximum grades in the majority of subjects. Then he transferred to the Jan III Sobieski Gymnasium in Kraków, from which he graduated in 1909, again with excellent grades. Shortly thereafter, also in 1909, he registered to attend the Jagiellonian University. At first he studied philosophy, and then, as of 1911, law. This last move may have been forced upon Peiper by his family, noted for many lawyers, including Dr Leon Peiper, another counsellor-at-law then active in the city of Przemyśl, who was Tadeusz's legal guardian after Dr. Marek Peiper's death. Tadeusz never received the degree, which may confirm his lukewarm response to these attempts. It is to be noted and recorded that in 1911 he attended lectures at the University of Berlin and, during a holiday break, briefly travelled to Denmark, where he visited the museum of natural history, about which he made insightful comments.[26]

Polish historiographers who are concerned with the origins of Peiper's thought almost unanimously agree that his novel, *Ma lat 22* [He is Twenty-two], most likely includes a great deal of autobiographical motifs and information. Stanisław Jaworski does not hesitate to say confidently that 'Peiper de-

[26] Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 42.

scribed his years at school and university in the novel *Ma lat 22*, based on autobiographical motifs."[27] (However, Jaworski retracts later, pointing out to the necessity of being careful about identifying Peiper with the hero of his novel.) If this holds true, then the young Peiper seems to have been involved in clandestine and semi-legal patriotic and left-wing organisations ("cells"), whose programmes promoted independence and social reform. It is known, Jaworski continues, that while at the gymnasium, Peiper was a member of a Marxist circle; and that he was familiar with the anarcho-syndicalist ideas (tinged with mysticism) of the religious reformer Augustyn Wróblewski (1866 – *ca.* 1913), which focussed on renewal of morals.[28] These early experiences had not been forgotten and left a major impression on Peiper's future writings. Logically, even more important were Peiper's experiences at the university where he briefly joined the paramilitary and patriotic Riflemen's Association "Rifleman" [Związek Strzelecki "Strzelec"],[29] probably between December 1912 and April 1913.[30]

In the meantime, his relationship with his mother, Elżbieta, deteriorated more than ever after her third marriage. Peiper could not bear the presence of his new step-father and often gave vent to his frustrations. The conflict dragged on and, insofar as it can be ascertained, Peiper's departure for Paris in

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[27] Stanisław Jaworski, *U podstaw awangardy*..., op. cit., 10.

[28] Ibidem. See also: Ignacy Zenon Siemion, „Sława i zniesławienie. O Życiu i pracach Augustyna Wróblewskiego" [Fame and Infamy. The Life and Work of Augustyn Wróblewski] in: *Analecta* 11, No. 1/2 (Warszawa: Instytut Historii Nauki PAN, 2002), 251-297.

[29] *Cf.* Chapter I.

[30] Stanisław Jaworski, "Nota biograficzna" in: Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 419.

1914 may be seen in this light also. There, he attended lectures by Henri Bergson (which may have later inspired his writings on comicality, humour and mechanisms of jesting), made contacts with *La Société polonaise littéraire et artistique*,[31] as well as with individual artists, including Moise [Mojżesz] Kisling (1891 – 1953), with whom he would later collaborate. The outbreak of the First World War prevented Peiper from returning to Kraków. As a citizen of the power hostile to France, he was first interned near Bordeaux, and then allowed to move to neutral Spain, where he could receive money from home.[32] By 1915, he settled and for the rest of his stay in Spain lived in Madrid. In 1918, which is relatively late—most probably he had to master the language first—he began writing for the Spanish press and, occasionally, working as an editor. While there, he published in *El Sol* (his debut in print on 24 December), *La Lectura*, *La Publicidad*. He contributed a series of commentaries, notes, articles and essays embracing an array of subjects ranging from literature to the most current political events such as Poland's independence, the Polish-Soviet war, the Silesian Uprisings, and plebiscites imposed on Poland by the Allies in order to decide the fate of several hotly contested territories. In 1920, he contributed the Prologue to the abridged edition of a large, crucial fragment of Władysław

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[31] Towarzystwo Polskie Literacko-Artystyczne, founded in 1910 by the popular writer, Wacław Gąsiorowski (1869-1939). Preceded by the Koło Polskie Artystyczno-Literackie [Le Cercle artistique et littéraire polonais] (1897-1910), led by the sculptor Cyprian Godebski (1835-1909), and independent of the Towarzystwo Artystów Polskich w Paryżu [La Société des artistes polonais à Paris], established in 1911 by the sculptor Stanisław Kazimierz Ostrowski (1879-1947). See: Ewa Bobrowska-Jakubowska, *Artyści polscy we Francji w latach 1890-1918. Wspólnoty i indywidualności* [Polish Artists in France 1890-1918. Communes and Individuals] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DiG, 2004).

[32] Stanisław Jaworski, "Nota biograficzna," op. cit., 420.

Reymont's epic novel, *Chłopi* [The Peasants, 1904-1909], already recognised internationally as a major achievement, even a masterpiece.[33] Despite the nature of this somewhat acrobatic linguistic exercise—Carlos Pereyra (1871 – 1942), who translated the book, did not speak Polish and used the French translation!—when on November 13, 1924 Reymont was awarded the Nobel Prize[34] for the novel, Peiper must have felt tremendous satisfaction in having helped the translator;[35] all his efforts vindicated by the success of the enterprise. [Later, Peiper spoke anecdotally yet with gusto about his initial reservations about endorsing a Spanish rendition of the Reymont novel from what he considered a rather unimaginative, substandard French translation, Marie-Anne de Bouvet's sixty-page-long abridged version, "La terre et la femme," published in 1911 in the *Revue de Paris*; another one, Franck-Louis Schoell's two-volume version was published in 1919 (his translation of the whole was only released in 1925, the year of Reymont's death); it is a pity Peiper did not have access to that one; no Polish source offers any valid information on these two French translators]. He changed his mind after having observed a Spanish colleague who accidentally found, grabbed and read the aforementioned French *Revue de Paris*

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[33] The first translation of Reymont's novel was into Ukrainian, the work of Mykoła Pawłyk. Then the Russian translation followed. The German translation which proved instrumental in establishing the novel's fame was by Jan Paweł Kaczkowski (a.k.a. Jean-Paul d'Arderschah). It appeared in 1912 in the Eugene Diederich imprint in Jena.

[34] Due to his serious heart illness he was not able to attend the ceremony.

[35] Peiper appeared on the title page as the co-translator under one of his noms de plume, Marcin Bielski. He only signed the Prologue with his real name. Jaworski, *U podstaw awangardy*..., op. cit., 11.

translation, immediately raving in awe: '¡Es magnifico! ¡Es grandioso!'][36] There is no doubt that Peiper must be considered at least the co-editor of the Spanish edition. In addition to his journalistic and editorial work, while still in Spain Peiper familiarised himself with all the newest tendencies in literature and the arts. This experience was to have an impact on his future life and work which is hard to ignore. He also came into close contact with several leading representatives of the avant-garde including, among others, the painter Robert Delaunay and the composer Manuel de Falla. Stanisław Jaworski suggests that in the Spring of 1920 Peiper finally left Spain for Vienna, where he stayed until 1921. It is possible that the prolonged sojourn there might have been inspired by the political situation, for exactly during that time Poland was entangled in the veritably mortal war with Soviet Russia, whose positive outcome for the newly reinstated republic was at the time much less then certain.[37] However, Peiper also speaks openly—as he always had—about the delay caused by a shortage of funds.[38]

[II.4] And then, on the way back to Poland, on the very day of his departure from Vienna, disaster struck of such magnitude that Peiper could not, it seems,

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[36] Tadeusz Peiper, *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś*, op. cit., 66.

[37] Norman Davies's *White Eagle, Red Star. The Polish-Soviet War, 1919-1920* (London: Orbis Books Ltd., 1983) remains the best study of that conflict available in English. For the incomparably amusing interpretation given from the (pseudo-Marxist) Soviet historiography point of view see: Ф.Г. Зуев, А.Я. Манусевич, И.А. Хренов (Ред.), История Польши, Том III – 1917-1944, (Москва: Ииздательство Академии Наук СССР, 1958) 116-157. [F. G. Zuev, A. Y. Manusevich, I. A. Khrenov (Eds.), The History of Poland, Vol. III 1917-1944 (Moscow: Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1958).

[38] *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 312.

get over it for years and spoke about it with almost neurotic persistence – he mentioned it in print no less then four times: thrice in his own texts and once in an interview. He also talked about it frequently, even obsessively. In 1924, in the introductory note opening his debut volume, *A*, he states: 'The poems included in this book come from a ten-year period (1914-1923).' The author's stay abroad, involuntarily prolonged by the war, as well as a railway accident which occurred on the day of his return to Poland and robbed him of all his manuscripts, all delayed publishing the first collection of poems.'[39] In 1929, in an interview given to the poet Marian Czuchnowski for the popular daily *Głos Narodu* [The Nation's Voice],[40] Peiper gives still more facts and explains why he founded his theoretical organ, *Zwrotnica* [The Switch], and to what extent the periodical served as a specific antidepressant: 'You know what? Instead of talking about every stage of my literary career, I will speak about its first stage. Do you know why *Zwrotnica* was brought forth? Due to misfortune! When I was travelling back home after several years of my involuntary sojourn abroad, I did not think at all of starting a journal. But in Vienna, on the day of my departure for Kraków, some one stole my valise where I kept my manuscripts, the fruit of

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[39] Tadeusz Peiper, *A* (Kraków: Zwrotnica, 1924) 3. Quoted in: Tadeusz Peiper (Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz and Stanisław Jaworski, Eds.), *Poematy i utwory teatralne* [Poems and Stage Works] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979) 635-363. 'Utwory zawarte w niniejszej książce, pochodzą z okresu dziesięciu lat (1914-1923). Pobyt autora za granicą, przedłużony przymusowo na skutek wojny, oraz przypadek kolejowy, który zdarzył się w dniu powrotu do kraju i pozbawił go wszystkich jego rękopisów, opóźniły ukazanie się pierwszego zbioru poezyj.'

[40] Published in Kraków between 1893 and 1939. An important journal of Christian Democrats. See: Alfred Toczek, "Emil Haecker i Jan Matyasik – redaktorzy antagonistycznych dzienników krakowskich" [Emil Haecker and Jan Matyasik – The Editors of Competing Journals in Kraków] in: *Konspekt*, No. 1/2005 (21) (Kraków: Akademia Pedagogiczna).

several years' work. The loss was so painful that during my first year in Kraków (1921) I was obsessed with suicide. At some point I made the final choice and the only question remaining was whether to lock myself up in the room where I was going to shoot myself, or leave the door unlocked.'[41] In 1930, the concluding chapter of the volume of his critical essays, *Tędy* [This Way], contains the following testimony, repeating the corresponding section of the Czuchnowski interview almost word for word: 'The article on new Spanish poetry was the first text with reference to literature, which I published in Poland... I was writing it during one of the saddest periods of my life, cast down by the loss of my manuscripts, which occurred at the Vienna station one quarter of an hour prior to leaving for Poland, and which deprived me of the fruits of several years' labour. I tried to conceal my pain from other people, yet it so tormented me that my thoughts revolved around the very last questions one asks before committing suicide.'[42] The most interesting elucidation, however, comes from the foreword to the *Poematy*, Peiper's collected poems which appeared in 1935. In

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[41] Marian Czuchnowski, "W ambasadzie awangardy" [At the Embassy of the Avant-Garde] in: *Głos Narodu*, No. 122, 9 May 1929. Quoted in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.) *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś...*, op. cit., 187. 'Wie Pan, czemu „Zwrotnica" zawdzięcza swe powstanie? Nieszczęściu! Kiedy po latach przymusowego pobytu za granicą wracałem do kraju, nie myślałemem wcale o zakładaniu pisma. Ale w dniu wyjazdu do Krakowa skradziono mi we Wiedniu walizkę, w której znajdowały się wszystkie moje rękopisy, owoc kilku lat życia. Byla to dla mnie strata tak bolesna, że przez pierwszy rok pobytu w Krakowie (rok 1921) zapadałem ciągle w myśli samobójcze. Aż wreszcie doszło do ostatecznego postanowienia i zastanawiałem się już tylko nad tym, czy pokój, w którym się zastrzelę, zamknąć na klucz, czy też nie.'

[42] Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy* (Warszawa: Księgarnia Ferdynanda Hoesicka, 1930) 399. Quoted in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.) *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 314. 'Artykuł o nowej poezji hiszpańskiej był pierwszym, jaki z zakresu literatury opublikowałem w kraju... Pisałem go w jednym z najsmutniejszych okresów mojego życia, w przygnębieniu spowodowanym stratą rękopisów, która kwadrans przed odejściem pociągu, mającego wieźć mnie do kraju, pozbawila mnie na dworcu we Wiedniu owoców kilkuletniej pracy i zepchnęła w ból, tajony przed ludźmi, ale tak szrapiący, że moje zamiary samobójcze obracały się już dokoła ostatnich pytań.'

it we read: 'My first volume... Bah! My first volume of poetry never saw the light of day – and never will. My manuscript, finished and ready to go to the printer as it was, was stolen. It was stolen in a foreign land, in a foreign city, in a famous library. It was snatched off from the table where I carelessly left it. Obviously, at that time I did not yet know writers... And although I still had an earlier manuscript version, it, too, was stolen the following year. Thank God, this time around it was a regular railway thief who was tempted by the suitcase, not by some one else's *œuvre*. Of the poems I wrote at that time not much was left, just a few sheets, mislaid somewhere – now nothing more than fallen petals.'[43]

The four separate narratives combine into one bigger narrative unit, in which the opening motif of stolen poems becomes a theme of sorts, serving as a material for further transformations, variations, development—not unlike short motifs in Baroque music, which were employed in forms such as fugue, or, rather, not unlike the Lisztian *idée fixe*, or the Wagnerian *Leitmotive*—recurring throughout the master narrative of Peiper's (creative) life. At the beginning, the motif is stated briefly, the idea is but signalised. Soon, it is subjected to elaboration and transformation (variation), as it is complemented by

[43] Tadeusz Peiper, *Poematy* (Kraków: Koło Wydawnicze „TERAZ", 1935) 5. Quoted in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *Poematy i utwory teatralne*, op. cit., 25. 'Pierwszy mój tomik... Ha, mój pierwszy tomik nie ukazał się, i nie ukaże się nigdy. Skradziono mi rękopis, całkowicie przygotowany już dla drukarni. Skradziono mi go w obcym kraju, w obcym mieście, w sławnej bibliotece. Skradziono mi go ze stołu, na którym zostawiłem go nieopatrznie, nie znając jeszcze dobrze literatów. Pozostał mi wprawdzie rękopis wcześniejszy, ale i ten mi rok później skradziono. Chwała bogu, tym razem był to już zwyczajny złodziej dworcowy, którego skusiła cudza walizka, a nie cudze dzieło. Z utworów owego czasu pozostało mi trochę zawieruszonych gdzieś kartek, ale mogły ony być już tylko opadłymi płatkami kwiatu.'

another, that of suicide. Finally, the variation process reaches its most developed, conclusive stage, at which there are two thefts instead of the initial one, the first committed by a writer (perhaps Peiper's acquaintance? A Spanish one? Very unlikely, really, as Peiper must have written in Polish. But under the circumstances anything would have been possible. A Polish émigré? We shall never know...) and the second by a professional thief. And although there is no mention of suicide any more, another paragraph implies death, another kind of (at least partial) non-existence or bereavement – emotional (creative) rather than physical: 'The loss which I sustained prevented other people from keeping track of the years of my poetic adolescence, and this must have had serious consequences for the future. People did not watch those first steps, they did not follow them from that point at which a writer always grows out of the literature which precedes him. Having lost the initial years of my poetry, I lost the ties which bound the author to the endearments of his land. What people first saw in me was already so different from what was being done around me, that it seemed artificial, monstrous. The resentment which accompanied my poetic efforts may be explained to a large extent by the theft of my beginnings.'[44]

In other words, Peiper claims that in the eyes of his audiences, denied by

[44] ibidem. 'Strata, jaką poniosłem, sprawiła, że młodzieńcze lata mojej drogi poetyckiej stały się dla ludzi nieznanymi, a to musiało mieć ważne następstwa. Nie widziano mojego pierwszego kroczenia, nie widziano go od punktu, którym pisarz zawsze wyrasta z literatury, która go poprzedza. Utraciwszy początkowe lata mojej poezji, utraciłem węzły łączące autora z czułościami kraju. To, co po raz pierwszy u mnie zobaczono, było już tak różne od tego wszystkiego, co robiono wokół, że wydało się tworem sztucznym, dziwolągiem. Obcość, na jaką natrafiały moje publikacje poetyckie, tłomaczy się w sporej mierze kradzieżą mojego początku.'

chance the opportunity to accompany him on his poetic journey right from the outset, he must have been perceived as an incomplete, handicapped poet. Importantly, the audiences could not witness Peiper's evolution which, as he might have expected, would have shown his mature poetry in another, brighter light. This, of course, resulted in painful controversy and misunderstanding of his poetics. Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz correctly interprets this as the poet's attempt to forestall the expected attack, a preëmptive strike intended to prepare grounds for the more favourable reception of his poetry.[45] In this context, the noticeable expansion of the opening motif of robbery (later – of poetic theft and robbery) over roughly a decade (1924-1935) stems from Peiper's ongoing unpleasant experiences related to the hostile reactions to, and often virulently negative critique of, his poetic work. As the criticism grew (or persisted), so did the poet's resolve to minimise its impact on the reader.

Stanisław Jaworski purposefully owns that what Peiper said about the adventure of the stolen valise was true: 'every person with whom I spoke on this subject is positively sure that the incident did happen, no question about it.'[46] It is quite apparent that for Peiper the shock, disappointment, and frustration were all too much to overcome the despair triggered by the loss of this important chapter of his creative work. The loss cast a shadow on the poet's percep-

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[45] Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz, *W kręgu „Zwrotnicy". Studia i szkice z dziejów krakowskiej Awangardy* [The "Zwrotnica" Circle. Studies and Sketches on the History of the Kraków Avant-garde] (Kraków – Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1983) 19-20.

[46] Jaworski, "Nota biograficzna" in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 420.

tion of reality and reverberated throughout his entire life. It was just one in a series of experiences which had been gradually making him perceive his environment as hostile (or at least coldly indifferent) and in the end made him absolutely convinced that he was a victim of a sinister plot. It contributed to Peiper's recognising and acknowledging his otherness both as dangerous guilt (and hence his subsequent defensive attitude) and as personal and artistic incompatibility with the literary *milieu*. It is no accident that he spoke about it on many crucial occasions, such as the publication of his first volume of poetry and then, years later, the publication of his collected poems, his proverbial poetic swan song. Confirmed by many, including his family, the sense of loss and the ensuing incomplete fulfilment would accompany Peiper to the very end. In a sense, he never recovered from the loss of his early poems, but he also skilfully used the incident to offset the often imaginary criticism. Be it as it may, it is more than likely that years later his decision to stop publishing and to withdraw from taking part in public life was in no small part a result of this experience.

So in fact, Peiper came back home exactly the way he had left it seven years earlier – as a regular, average citizen, a thirty-year-old artistic non-entity.

[II.5] At the onset of Independence, the Polish literary scene had already seemed predestined for what was later to be considered the most unique period in the history of Polish letters thus far. Writers were among the first who fore-

saw the coming of the long-awaited breakthrough – and it was they who were first to express the newly regained optimism in a great number of programmes and manifestoes. Never before and never after—as one author insists—had Polish literature seen so many of them than around 1918 and the following years, namely during the first decade of the interwar period. On not infrequent occasions, the literary programmes and manifestoes of the day appeared to be more important that the literature itself. This zest in producing programmes and manifestoes left no one unresponsive, and became apparent in a wide—and wild!—variety of communicative acts: lectures, talks, articles in newspapers and magazines, pamphlets, brochures, books, even philosophical treatises, let alone outbursts of individual violence caused by ideological differences, and litigations.[47]

Jerzy Kwiatkowski perceives the activities in the area of turning out programmes and manifestoes (even – "manufacturing" them on a massive scale) as leading to the emergence of a specific, new, separate genre, whose two main characteristics were: 1) precise delineation of authors' (aesthetic) stance—each programme and manifesto drawing borderlines between movements and

[47] See Jan Stur (b. Hersz Feingold), *Na przełomie. O nowej i starej poezji* [At the Turning Point. Of Poetry New and Old] (Lwów: Spółka Nakładowa „Odrodzenie", 1921), which is a typical product of the epoch. Stur's first-rate book, rich in ideas and full of accurate analyses of lasting relevance is also an example of the quality and breadth of Polish literary *milieu* and its preoccupations immediately after World War I. The book may be considered an elaborate manifesto of Polish Expressionism, yet it also offers interesting vistas on Polish Futurism and other literary groups of the period, such as Skamander.

groups—and 2) persistent, stubborn autocommentary.[48] Significantly, instead of shunning the general public as "unworthy" (as had often been done a generation earlier, at the turn of the 20th Century), artists now made deliberate efforts to justify their respective positions, and not only did they target the traditionally committed readers/leaders, but the wider, often non-reading audience as well, including the lower strata of the Polish society, including the urban proletariat. These tactics must not surprise, as the social lesson of the Italian Futurism was not lost on Polish artists, or at least some of them, especially and quite naturally Futurists. They were fully aware of the fact that in Italy Futurism had found strong resonance among the working classes, that it had become a social movement (fed on strong nationalism, even chauvinism as well as calls for social change and reforms), and that the Italian workers had often protected and defended the Futurists during the latter's public appearances. It suffices to say that out of 20 thousand copies of the large Futurist magazine, *Lacerba* (and a 20-thousand circulation figure for an avant-garde publication is impressive in itself), 16 thousand were distributed among, and willingly purchased by, Italian workers.[49] Such a huge response would be unthinkable in Poland, recovering politically and economically from partitions and entwined for the moment in border disputes, the Polish-Soviet war threatening the new

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[48] Jerzy Kwiatkowski, *Dwudziestolecie międzywojenne* [The Twenty Interwar Years] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2001) 9.

[49] Stanisław Jaworski, "Futuryzm" in: Anna Skoczek (Ed.), *Historia literatury polskiej. Dwudziestolecie międzywojenne* [The History of Polish Literature. The Interwar Period], Vol. VIII (Bochnia, Kraków, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SMS, 2006) 36ff.

republic's very existence notwithstanding. To put it in simplest terms, at that time people had much more on their minds than becoming "pawns" in the hands of small groups of artists. Yet respond they did, at least sporadically, albeit on a much smaller scale than in Italy or Russia, where Futurism and its offshoots had gradually become present on the political scene.

In addition, Kwiatkowski observes that at the peak of what he refers to as "programmatic creativity," *i.e.* during the period of active, even relentless creation of programmatic literature and publication of manifestoes—two forms of literary pursuits clearly prioritised during the years 1918 – 1927—the majority of those who produced such literature were young ("up and coming") writers, who had only made their first steps in the literary field, but were determined to change it – and desired others to learn about it.[50] However, it was a representative of the older generation, the revered novelist Stefan Żeromski (1864 – 1925), associated with the naturalist school and the anti-positivist, Modernist movement popularly known as the Young Poland, who carried off the palm as early as 1915, when he delivered the famous lecture, *Literatura a życie polskie* [Literature and Polish Life]. Kwiatkowski does not hesitate to call this lecture "astonishing," and rightly so. Firstly, Żeromski struck his listeners and, subsequently, his commentators and critics by speaking so early on in the war, when there were almost no signs of the political situation turning for the better in favour of Poland, about new Polish literature and the rôle of the writer in a

[50] Ibidem.

manner suggesting that he considered these issues as if Poland's independence were already round the corner, almost a *fait accompli*. In this regard he was almost prophetic and showed a very keen political instinct – neither the first nor the last time he would do so in his life.

Secondly, despite his strong previous convictions as to the place of literature and writers within the society and their huge responsibilities in the areas of artistic, political and social work, which, according to him, required serious involvement, all of the sudden Żeromski changed the tone of his claims and demanded that in the new country writers become concerned with literature – and literature only! To Żeromski, the stance of the controversial, one-time Futurist Giovanni Papini (1881 – 1956), whom he quoted, proved exemplary: 'In Italy the political matters are in the hands of the Minister of Foreign Affairs; the social matters are the domain of the Minister of Internal Affairs; and I am in charge of the literary matters and only such matters concern me.'[51] Papini's terse statement served Żeromski to exemplify his own, newly found conviction concerning writers and their tasks under the presupposed circumstances: independence and its aftermath as applied to literary culture. In his own inimitable way, speaking point blank yet with conviction, elegance and charm, Żeromski demonstrated how impossibly limited the contemporary Polish literature had been. Focussed almost solely on issues such as national survival and conservatively understood social health; suffering from the overtly didactic outlook; be-

[51] Ibidem.

littled by sickly polonocentric attitudes bordering on bigotry, it was not, in his opinion, ready to face the challenges of the new, refreshing reality (again: independence). 'Here, in Poland, there are practically no literary works,' he said, 'whose only purpose remains artistic.' Further on: 'For decades, Polish literature had been but substituting for the institutions of communal [social] life.' What it meant, according to Żeromski, was that literature served as a substitute for the institutions and administrative acts—obviously affecting Polish society—implemented and imposed by the partitioning powers. This was surely a somewhat simplistic stance, for Żeromski forgot, or did not want to take into consideration, the autotelic (self-centred) nature of the Polish Modernist movement (the Young Poland, roughly 1890 – 1918), to which he himself belonged, being one of its standard-bearers and most admired representatives. On the other hand, not for nothing was Żeromski called the "steersman of Polish literature."[52] Given his national stature as the best, and most respected, prose writer and moral authority of immense influence, he could afford committing little errors and taking intellectual shortcuts while conveying his argument to the public. Even though Stanisław Przybyszewski (1868 – 1927), the

[52] See the very first issue of the most influential and most enduring (it appeared from 6 January 1924 until 3 September 1939; altogether 829 issues were published) literary weekly in interwar Poland, *Wiadomości Literackie* [The Literary News], No 1, 6 January 1924. The front page features an interview with Żeromski, entitled "Visiting the Steersman of Polish Literature" [U sternika polskiej literatury]. One year later Żeromski who, in the meantime, was invited to live in the Royal Castle in Warsaw, was dead. See: Janusz Stradecki, "Wiadomości Literackie" in: Jerzy Kądziela, Jerzy Kwiatkowski, Irena Wyczańska (Eds.). *Literatura polska w okresie międzywojennym* [Polish Literature Between The Wars] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979) 281-292; Sławomir Żurawski (Ed.), *Literatura polska. Encyklopedia PWN. Epoki literackie, prądy i kierunki, dzieła i twórcy* [Polish Literature – Encyclopædia. Literary Epochs, Currents and Movements, Works and Writers] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2007) 769-770.

most notable figure in the Polish Modernist movement, made several good points in his critique of Żeromski's lecture, he could not change the overall reaction to it.

One of Żeromski's most misleadingly attractive points was that since in contemporary Poland one could finally notice an energetic development of local administration (local self-government), education and coöperatives (Żeromski considered coöperatives to be of the utmost importance), Polish literature should finally 'enter its own circle' ['by piśmiennictwo polskie weszło w swoje własne kolisko'] and leave 'political and societal matters in the hands that were called to do it and reached out for it' ['by sprawy polityczne i społeczne [oddać] w powołane, wyciągnięte ręce'], which meant that the political and social matters should be left to the professional politicians' discretion.

The reality, however, was different. Poland still suffered partition, the only change being that as a result of the Central Powers' offensive, the Russians were pushed east out of their part of the country and replaced by the German and Austro-Hungarian administration. The supposed social freedoms did not materialise; one—only slightly more tolerant—authoritarian regime replaced another. But to Żeromski it was enough; to him it signified the coming of change and strengthened his conviction regarding the possible overthrow of the century-long oppression which would lead to redefining the rôle of Polish writers, now finally able to stop concerning themselves with national and social issues and to liberate literature from any moral, didactic and overall utilitarian

functions.

Despite Żeromski's argument's obvious shortcomings and oversimplifications, its strange, "unreal" idealism notwithstanding, and while highly critical voices were not lacking, the reaction to his lecture was generally positive. In the end, Żeromski's flawed line of reasoning was accepted by many critics as truth – they repeated his theses throughout the twenty years of independence.

[II.6] Thus Żeromski, who by the way never again returned to the subject matter of his famous lecture, had influenced a large number of artists, scholars and literary critics, active after 1918, when Poland, indeed, regained her independence. To them it was obvious that literature should be autotelic in nature, that literature should serve itself, rather than the oppressed nation. Again, this proved easier said than done. One could not simply do away with the almost genetically inherited tendency of Polish writers to participate in the life of the nation reborn. Kwiatkowski cogently stresses this dichotomy between the idealistic programmes and manifestoes and everyday literary practice.[53] He points out that even those writers who at the beginning of independence called for normality—like the Skamadrite poet Jan Lechoń who in his much discussed poem, *Herostrates*, wishes that 'and in the summer – let me summer see, not Poland' [A wiosną – niechaj wiosnę, nie Polskę, zobaczę]—were not able to shed their natural inclinations towards social involvement. Indeed, the idea of

[53] Kwiatkowski, op.cit., 11.

l'art pour l'art no longer had much appeal to those who, like the rest of the nation, did everything they could to add to restoring the edifice of nationhood. Here, the ideological evolution of Polish Futurists—the first "revolutionary" movement in Polish letters after the Great War—was quite symptomatic: they began with a series of typically "futuristic" excesses aimed at artistic, literary and social conventions, only to evolve later a radical, leftist poetics. Some of them – like Bruno Jasieński – ended their lives (or, rather, their lives were violently ended during the Great Purge) in the Soviet Union, where they, more or less willingly, emigrated.[54]

Some literary critics in Poland refer to Polish Futurism as "belated," 'almost ten years younger than the Italian and Russian [Futurism]. When it was emerging in 1919, the cardinal manifestoes of the majority of avant-garde movements—except Surrealism—had already been written, and the creative efforts of their initiators brought about concrete results.'[55] Such opinions are valid – but only to a certain extent. Avant-garde movements are, as if by default, team (group) efforts. It is possible, of course, to imagine an avant-garde "movement of one" (cases in point: James Joyce and, in Poland, the amazing Stanisław

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[54] A number of ideologically radical Polish writers who emigrated to the Soviet Union even before the war, perished during the 1930s in Stalinist purges. Especially telling is the fate of the three well-known former Futurist and Communist writers, Bruno Jasieński, Witold Wandurski (1891 – 1934) and Stanisław Ryszard Stande (1897 – 1937)who, like their Ukrainian counterparts Mykhail' Semenko (1892 – 1937), Geo Shkurupii (1903 – 1937), Oleksa Slisarenko (1891 – 1937), and Iuliian Shpol (1895 – 1937), were murdered there. See Oleh Ilnytzkyj. *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914-1930. A Historical and Critical Study* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1997).

[55] Zbigniew Jarosiński, Helena Zaworska (Eds.), *Antologia polskiego futuryzmu i Nowej Sztuki* [The Anthology of Polish Futurism and New Art] (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1978) IV.

Ignacy Witkiewicz, known as Witkacy, 1885 – 1939)[56]—and Polish Futurism, as it will be made clear in a moment, had until the end of the First World War been represented by a single person—yet it remains clear that avant-garde movements are collective by nature, individuals finding additional strength by being backed up by their peers.

In the pre-First World War Poland literary (or artistic) groups were practically non-existent; movements such as the Modernist Young Poland, yes, but not separate, quasi-formal groups in the above sense. Automatically, the potential creative energy remained dispersed. Figuratively speaking, within the Polish literary scene before 1918, entropy reigned supreme. Jerzy Kwiatkowski, in yet another highly insightful text of his, briefly explains that such a situation arose first due to the political circumstances,[57] and second due to the rampant individualism of the Young Poland artistic *milieu*, strongly averse to team ef-

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[56] Says Miłosz: '[In Witkacy's plays] his fantastic psychology, his language bearing little resemblance to ordinary speech, [...] inventiveness in devising improbable situations, in juxtaposing costumes of various epochs, coining new words, and in the naming of his characters (for instance, "Doña Scabrosa Macabrescu") made him, certainly, one of the most interesting phenomena in modernist theatre... The plays are also orgies of philosophy, since even the humblest figure knows the most complicated treatises on ontology... Stylistically, Witkiewicz was a descendant of "Young Poland." But writers of "Young Poland" were solemn, while Witkiewicz pressed the pedal all the way to the floor in order to achieve grotesque effects of humorous bathos... His work was taboo in postwar [Communist] Poland, but in the late fifties literary critics of the young generation recognized him as one of the most figures in modernist Polish literature, and his plays became a permanent feature in the theatrical repertoire.' Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983) 418-420.

[57] Daniel Gerould elucidates neatly: 'Poland, which until 1918 had not existed as an independent country for almost a century and a half, was at a particular disadvantage in trying to follow the changing fashions in modernist [...] innovation, for it had become isolated and turned inward by its own national obsessions and struggles. Because of Poland's peculiar historical and geographic position, symbolism, expressionism, futurism, Dadaism, and surrealism arrived as imports from Russia or Western Europe...' See: Daniel Gerould, *Twentieth-Century Polish Avant-garde Drama. Plays, Scenarios, Critical Documents* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1977) 14.

forts.[58] To be sure, in some parts of Poland, especially in the Russian partition, any groups, be it formal or informal, were looked upon by the authorities with extreme suspicion. Combined with the struggle to preserve their native language and culture—and in German and Russian partitions the administration imposed a strictly observed strategy of subduing Polish elements and ruthlessly enforced policies of Germanisation and Russification, respectively—Polish writers faced tasks much different from those that their Russian or Western European counterparts did. For the most part, Polish literature of the late 19th Century was pragmatic rather than visionary. The incredible shock of the 1863 January Uprising and the ensuing brutal reaction of the Czarist authorities (which resulted in almost a total suppression of Polish autonomy, whatever it may have been earlier in the Russian partition)[59] combined, as it has been noted, with the energetic Germanisation (part of the *Kulturkampf* against the Poles) undertaken roughly at the same time in the German-controlled part of Poland, led among the native elites to a profound re-evaluation of the course of action to be taken.[60] Even in the relatively tolerant and autonomous Austrian partition the defeat of the January insurgents did not go unnoticed. Politically, that defeat, accompanied by the final suppression of traditional freedoms and

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[58] Jerzy Kwiatkowski, "Główne nurty poezji dwudziestolecia" [Main Currents in Poetry Between the Wars] in: Jerzy Kądziela, Jerzy Kwiatkowski, Irena Wyczańska (Eds.). *Literatura polska w okresie międzywojennym* [Polish Literature Between the Wars] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979) 9.

[59] Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, Vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 364-365.

[60] Adam Gillon, Ludwik Krzyżanowski and Krystyna Olszer (Eds.), *Introduction to Modernist Polish Literature. An Anthology of Fiction and Poetry* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1982) 23-24.

rights, the decimation of the patriotic gentry (predominantly in the Russian partition),[61] and the rapidly changing social structure during the early days of the capitalist enterprise—including the enfranchisement (emancipation) of the peasantry and the emergence of the modern proletariat—was a turning, if not even another defining, point in the history of Poland – and its culture. It was often thought imperative to abandon the heroic stance of Romanticism, nay, to forget it. As Kleiner nicely put it, the Romantic "Messiah" was replaced by the Positivist "educator of the nation."[62]

[II.7] The Positivist idea of "organic work" (the term coined in the mid-19th Century by Polish reformers in the Prussian partition),[63] that is to say work focussing on utilitarian, political realism (often bordering on loyalism), on practical, science-based economic activities (technology, industry, commerce, agriculture), on education of the largely ignorant and illiterate masses, on moral and medical hygiene – was substituted for the Romantic idealistic, heroic, democratic, revolutionary—and ultimately unrealistic and futile—stance.[64] This organic work, or "work at the (social) foundations," aimed for the creation of a modern society, equal to the western societies of the time, equal to the

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[61] Ibidem, 182-183.

[62] Juliusz Kleiner (and Włodzimierz Maciąg). *Zarys dziejów literatury polskiej* [The Outline of History of Polish Literature] (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1972), 377.

[63] Henryk Markiewicz, *Literatura i historia* [Literature and History] (Kraków: Universitas, 1994) 76.

[64] Kleiner, op. cit., 365-368.

challenges posed by the rapidly developing capitalist formation. It also aimed for preservation of the Polish national element, subjected to vehement repressions.[65] It has to be understood that Polish Positivists were not unpatriotic and necessarily resigned to accepting the political *status quo* of the partitions. Contrariwise, they *were* patriots, but expressed their patriotism in a way they considered workable.[66] To them it was much more important to create favourable social grounds for a possible rebirth of the state, and to create such favourable grounds they preferred to employ any available l e g a l means.[67] Peter D. Stachura states:

> With the failure of the 1863 insurrection against the Russians, thus ending, for the time being at least, the era of Romantic nationalism in Poland, most Poles invested their energies and hopes in a process that came to be known as 'Organic Work'. Notions of armed rebellion as a way of regaining Poland's freedom and independence were abandoned in favour of a strategy which, shaped by the Positivist school of thought in Warsaw, emphasized the virtues of developing the economy, education, language and culture through hard work and thrift within the partitionist political and constitutional order. 'Organic Work' was under-

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[65] With the notable exception of the Austrian partition. Shaken by the severe defeats by France and Piedmont (1859) and Prussia (1866), the dual monarchy could not but loosen its grip on the nations within its borders and relax its hitherto rather inflexible internal policy. The Polish Partition, Galicia, obtained limited autonomy in spheres such as self-government, jurisdiction, administration, education and economy. See: Juliusz Bardach (Ed.), *Historia państwa i prawa Polski* [The History of the Polish State and Its Legal System], Vols. III & IV (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1981); Józef Buszko, *Historia Polski. Od niewoli do niepodległości 1864-1918* [The History of Poland. From Bondage To Independence 1864-1918], Vol. VIII (Kraków: Fogra, 2000); Zbigniew Fras, Galicja [Galicia] (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1999); Anna Skoczek, *Historia literatury polskiej. Pozytywizm*, op. cit., 16. See also: Charles L. Killinger, *The history of Italy* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002) 111-116; Steven Beller, *A Concise History of Austria* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Endre Hárs, *Zentren, Peripherien und kollektive Identitäten in Österreich-Ungarn* (Tübingen: Francke, 2006).

[66] Grażyna Borkowska, "Pozytywizm – blaski i cienie" in: *Znak*, No. 2(489) (Kraków: 1996), 14-15; See also: Grażyna Borkowska, *Pozytywiści i inni. Mała historia literatury polskiej*, Vol. 6 [The Positivists and Others. A Concise History of Polish Literature.] (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1996) 14 ff; Kleiner, op. cit., 366.

[67] Kleiner, ibidem.

> stood as a more rewarding and effective means, in the age of industrialization, of preserving the Polish identity, even if this meant accepting the oppressive reality of partition and postponing the idea of regaining independence far into the future.[68]

To this, Grażyna Borkowska adds:

> To the generation of Positivists, patriotism was an obvious point of departure, written into their biographies, though rarely a part of their programme... Positivism was a response to the situation after the defeat, a response formulated against the double enemy – the repressive Partitioning powers as well as that part of public opinion at home, which escaped into privacy, cultivation of national symbols and national rituals. Thus they understood their own patriotism and impressed this understanding upon the rest. The generation of Prus and Orzeszkowa realised very well that the calamity of the January Uprising fundamentally changed the condition of the Poles, that the romantic scenario had to be disposed of as entirely useless... [T]he masses must now find their own proper place, determined by the standards of a modern, civic state.'[69]

Logically, to many—perhaps to most—younger and newcoming writers and artists the romantic paradigm was not relevant any more; the new philosophy implied, and given the circumstances unquestionably demanded, new ways of resuming the social multilogue. Hence, the almost immediate triumph and the immense popularity of realism and, later, naturalism among them. But among Polish critics (and then the educated echelons of the public), the entire Positivist "epoch" has right from the outset generated passionate polemics and extreme—in the truest sense of the word—opinions – and it is not difficult to see why. When viewed through the flamboyant excess of Romantic heroics, Polish

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[68] Peter D. Stachura (Ed.), *Poland between the Wars, 1918-1939*, op. cit., 63.
[69] Borkowska, op. cit., 14-15.

Positivist literature *may* seem rather too shy, too lacklustre, too boring,[70] too pragmatic, and too didactic, at its worst sometimes even nauseating in its pseudo-realistic and pseudo-naturalistic sentimentality and intellectual primitivism – oftentimes when portraying the harsh living conditions of the lower classes. To make matters worse, in the 1950s, likely the darkest period in Poland's history after the Second World War, this particular attribute of the Positivist school, the focus on society's lower classes (victims of the prejudiced and degenerate aristocracy, abusive gentry, and insatiable capitalists), was not lost on the Communist ideologues. They reached out for the Positivist literary tradition as a ready-made propaganda tool, a template of sorts, to promote the Soviet-sponsored æsthetics of socialist realism,[71] according to them the Holy Grail of people's literature and the arts. Exploring and expounding the similarities and topical analogies between Positivist literature and socialist realism served to make the new cultural and social policies look righteous, [72] it served to achieve 'clearly manipulative and unbearably didactic goals.'[73] No wonder generation upon generation of disgusted pupils, students and the reading pub-

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[70] Marta Wyka, "Niewygoda międzyepoki" [The Discomfort in Between Epochs] in: *Znak*, No. 2(489) (Kraków: 1996) 99-101. *Cf.* the other essays in the same issue of *Znak*: Grażyna Borkowska, "Pozytywizm – blaski i cienie" [Positivism – Its Splendours and Miseries] 13-19; Henryk Markiewicz, "Pochwała polskiego pozytywizmu" [In Praise of Polish Positivism] in: *Znak*, No. 2(489) 102-111; Aneta Mazur, "Łagodne prawo pozytywizmu" [The Gentle Law of Positivism] 20-23; Jerzy Szacki, "Gdyby pozytywizmu nie było..." [If There Were No Positivism...] 89-92; Jan Tomkowski, "Żadnych szans na pozytywizm?" [No Chance for Positivism?] 5-12; Teresa Walas, "Przedwczesny pogrzeb pozytywizmu" [The Premature Burial of Positivism] 93-97.

[71] Edward Możejko, *Realizm socjalistyczny. Teoria. Rozwój. Upadek* [Socialist Realism. Theory. Evolution. Decline] (Kraków: Universitas, 2001).

[72] Anna Skoczek, *Historia literatury polskiej. Pozytywizm* [The History of Polish Literature. Positivism]], Vol. VI (Bochnia, Kraków, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SMS, 2006) 7.

[73] Wyka Marta, ibidem.

lic (not to mention some very unenthusiastic academics and literary critics) rejected Positivist literature as a matter of course.

On the other hand it would be too simple—and simplistic—a solution to dismiss the poor Positivists as irrelevant, a stillborn child of Polish pragmatism (if there is such a thing). For a while now, the Positivist tradition has been earnestly reconsidered and re-evaluated in Poland's scholarly circles – and rightly so, for the achievement of the Polish Positivist intellectuals, educators, artists and writers (maybe the novelists and journalists more than the poets and playwrights) is nothing short of impressive. They perfected the vernacular – flexible, elegant, now saturated with economy and precision; originally developed and effectively cultivated genres such as the novel, short story and others; laid the foundations for the development of a modern press, progressive journalism and its own genres; gave the necessary impetus to the spread of literacy.[74] Some of them did produce spectacular works. Henryk Sienkiewicz (1846 – 1916) remains the best known, the first Pole to receive the Nobel Prize (1905) for his classic, *Quo vadis* (first published in periodicals between 1895 and 1896). He started off as a journalist[75] among whose works are some excellent American sketches and reports based on his travels there. Then he tried his hand at prose writing, which brought him colossal success and popularity. Sienkiewicz is a special case in that he, like Flaubert in *Salammbô*, was able to remain a realist and, at the same time, cultivate the genre of historic novel going back to

[74] Anna Skoczek, *Historia literatury polskiej. Pozytywizm*, op. cit., 21.
[75] Ibidem, 394.

Sir Walter Scott, albeit much differently. His enjoyable, superbly designed and written historic frescoes in prose, dealing with the crucial period of the mid-17th Century wars with the Cossacks, Swedes and the Ottoman Empire, became an essential part of the Polish literary canon. In them, he revived the traditional, nationalistic imperialist ideal (akin to the German *Drang nach Osten*), for which he was severely, even contemptuously, chastised by the eminent and controversial critic, Stanisław Brzozowski (1878 – 1911),[76] as well as Czesław Miłosz.[77] Alongside Sienkiewicz, Bolesław Prus (Aleksander Głowacki, 1847 – 1912) and two excellent women writers of 'the first order:' the poet, journalist and novelist, Maria Konopnicka (1842 – 1910), and Eliza Orzeszkowa, (1841 – 1910) who left notable prose works, have remained significant,[78] as have the excellent realist painters such as Stanisław Witkiewicz (also prose writer and critic; 1851 – 1915, father of Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz – Witkacy), Maksymilian Gierymski (1846 – 1874) and his brother Aleksander (1850 – 1901), and Józef Chełmoński (1849-1914).

Both the critics of and the apologists for the Positivist episode—with its cult of rational progress, modern technology, sciences, education, social activism, and with its well hidden social idealism—often tend to overlook one of its most

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[76] Stanisław Brzozowski (Ed. Henryk Markiewicz), *Eseje i studia o literaturze* [Essays and Literary Studies] (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1990) 411.

[77] *Cf.* Czesław Miłosz, *Prywatne obowiązki* [Private Obligations] (Olsztyn: Pojezierze, 1990).

[78] Grażyna Borkowska, Malgorzata Czermińska, Ursula Phillips, *Pisarki polskie od średniowiecza do współczesności. Przewodnik* [Polish Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present. A Guide] (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2000) 70-75, 80-83; Grażyna Borkowska, *Alienated Women. A Study of Polish Women's Fiction 1845-1918*. Translated by Ursula Phillips (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 192-202, 204-233.

interesting aspects – its connection to that wing of the Polish avant-garde of the interwar period, which took up where the Positivists, and not just the Modernists, left off: Tadeusz Peiper and the Kraków Avant-garde.

[II.8] One must but agree that the Positivists' provincialism and eventual failure to impose the desired social changes— logically, when faced with inflexible state policies, the Positivists' efforts proved futile—put off many of its critics, who considered its ideas outdated and influence suffocating. Gillon, Krzyżanowski and Olszer explain: 'Poland's traditional close ties with Western Europe were impaired after the 1863 uprising and the country was cut off from the mainstream of European thought and art. This lasted for some two decades, when European influences began once again to seep into the country's intellectual blood stream. The European influence was clearly felt in the movement called Young Poland, which began in Austrian Poland, especially in Cracow.'[79] Undeniably, it remains obvious that younger artists may have felt scornful toward the Positivists' project; they may have felt also that within the Positivist framework there was no room for spontaneous self-expression, and that there was no room for experimentation either. Their reaction was violent, unforgiving – and partially (but only partially) justified.

The period typically referred to by Polish historiography and literary scholarship as Young Poland still generates emotions, both among the critics and

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[79] Adam Gillon, Ludwik Krzyżanowski and Krystyna Olszer, op. Cit., 26.

general literary audience. Usually, it is believed to have flourished between 1890 and 1918. Of course, such periodisations are always a matter of scholarly convention. However, it is also true that around 1890 there occurred among Polish intellectuals, critics, artists and writers alike, a visible and almost physically felt shift in the literary and artistic paradigms.[80] Young Poland—the term was coined in 1898 by the critic, writer and translator, Artur Górski (1870 – 1950), in a series of articles published in the Kraków weekly, *Życie* [Life], later issued in a separate volume (then withdrawn)—was characterised by an amalgamation of Romantic and current, innovative (Modernist) *topoi*, some absorbed from the local tradition (such as Polish Romanticism and, quite ironically, progressive traits of Positivism) and some, from the West (*Art Nouveau*, *Sezession*).[81] Górski's argument was supported by that of the aforementioned Stanisław Przybyszewski, then *Życie*'s Editor-in-Chief, in his famous manifesto of extreme personal artistic solipsism, *Confiteor*, published in 1899, shortly after Górski's programme.

First and foremost, Young Poland is synonymous with extreme æstheticism,

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[80] *Cf.* Tadeusz Bujnicki and Janusz Maciejewski (Eds.), *Przełom antypozytywistyczny w polskiej świadomości kulturowej końca XIX wieku* [The Antipositivist Breakthrough in Polish Cultural Consciousness at the End of the 19th Century] (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk, Łódź: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1986). See also: Anna Skoczek (Ed.), *Historia literatury polskiej. Pozytywizm* [The History of Polish Literature. The Interwar Period. Positivism], Vol. VI (Bochnia, Kraków, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SMS, 2006); eadem, *Historia literatury polskiej. Młoda Polska* [The History of Polish Literature. Young Poland], Vol. VII (Bochnia, Kraków, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SMS, 2006); Kazimierz Wyka, *Młoda Polska* [Young Poland], Vols. I & II (Kraków: Wydawncitwo Literackie, 1987).

[81] Sławomir Żurawski (Ed.), *Literatura polska. Encyklopedia PWN*, op. Cit., 234, 442-446 [excerpts from Górski's progrmmatic article], 441-449, 708-710 [excerpts from Stanisław Przybyszewski's manifesto, *Confiteor*]. See also: Maria Podraza-Kwiatkowska (Ed.), *Programy i dyskusje literackie okresu Młodej Polski* [Young Poland's Programmes and Literary Discussions] (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2000).

with a "flamboyant" aesthetical and philosophical reaction against Positivism, here understood as Young Poland's antithesis. The differences, as stressed in various ways by critics and artists themselves, were numerous and signalled a radical departure from the predominantly rationalistic models based on emulation of pragmatic doctrines of the mid-19th Century philosophy (Auguste Comte, also the Utilitarian philosophy of John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer). Górski and Przybyszewski clearly saw the incompatibilities of the two systems when they compared Young Poland, associated with fresh, *Modernist* tendencies, to the *philistine* Positivism. This conflict between Positivism and Young Poland is very telling. The ideological and structural differences between Positivism and Young Poland can be reduced to a series of common polarities.

- On an æsthetic level: whereas Positivism favoured a realistic, discursive, cool and balanced approach, narrative discipline and formal order, Young Poland rejected such method in favour of brutal naturalism (as in best prose of Stefan Żeromski); symbolism (as in mature poetry of Jan Kasprowicz's, 1860 – 1926); impressionism (as in the so-called landscape lyric of Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer, 1865 – 1940); non-discursive, free narrative strategies and formal openness (as in the stage works and poetry of Bolesław Miciński, 1873 – 1918, the highly innovative precursor of Expressionism and Surrealism, among others; as well as in the novels, prose poems and dramas of Stanisław Przybyszewski himself).

- On a rhetorical level: the Positivist language of Prus or Orzeszkowa – orderly, characterised by lexical elegance and responsiveness to the moral attributes of the subject, which in the end gave a sense of moderation and balance – was now replaced by lexical and syntactical *eccentricity*; a preference for asymmetrical, "flawed" beauty; a partiality for the striking and the bizarre, now habitually substituted for regularity and order; a preference for pathological detail above symmetry and proportion; a predilection for sparkling, hyperexpressive style; for the emotionally charged phrase; for the mysterious, exotic epithetical qualities; for all that dazzles, amazes, scandalises, undermines narrative conventions (as it does in Przybyszewski's erotically obsessed prose and drama); desire for expressing conflicts within social narratives (as in the prose of Wacław Berent, 1873 – 1940, especially his novels: *Fachowiec* [The Specialist, 1895] and *Ozimina* [Winter Wheat, 1911]).
- On an ethical level: Young Poland, in its dialectical resistance to Positivist philosophy, shook off the notions of the unchangeable, perennial wisdom of the society, superiority of **pure** (or practical) reason as a governing principle of human actions, and that of the rational method, moving instead towards the irrational and recognition of spontaneously expressed feelings and passions as a justifiable sources of learning.
- On an epistemological level: the Positivists worshipped the empirical approach to cognitive process (as manifested in contemporary sciences) and

to observable aspects of human existence; as a result a gradual replacement of the authority of the metaphysics led to increasing rationalisation of life in general. Young Poland, in turn, stressed the importance of the individual's own metaphysical and transcendental experience (Przybyszewski: *Zur Psycholigie des Individuums. Chopin und Nietzsche*, 1892) – the individual "could" now desire to understand the essence of things, the essence filtered through one's subjective perceptions. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Sorel, Bergson – these were the modernists' philosophical reference points.

- On a theological/ontological level: Young Poland challenged the Positivists' elegant and fairly traditional vision of God. The Modernists undermined the mechanistic concept of the orderly fashion in which the divine providence organised Nature. Hanna Filipkowska observes that Polish Modernists were obsessed with the eschatological motif of *Dies irae*, God's wrath and final 'closure of the sacred history of the world' on the Judgment Day (*vide* significant works entitled *Dies irae* by Jan Kasprowicz; Edward Leszczyński, 1880 – 1921; Bolesław Miciński; Lucjan Rydel, 1870 – 1918; Jerzy Żuławski, 1874 – 1915; also Włodzimierz Perzyński, 1877 – 1930; and Władysław Orkan, 1875 – 1930). Alternatively, Young Poland announced interest in individual, often mythical, heroes, oriental religions and Satanism (the idea of artists as Satan's, or Lucifer's, servants; Przybyszewski: *To-*

tenmesse, 1893; *Satans Kinder*, 1897).[82]

- On a conceptual level: as opposed to the urban-orientated Positivism (although due to the nature and state of the economy Polish Positivists often employed rural *topoi*), Young Poland acknowledged the metaphysical and transcendental value of Nature – it idolised rustic elements, and incorporated a natural, "unpolished," dynamic and not infrequently demonic or, on the contrary, offering a sensual metaphor of faith, landscape and everyday rural life into its ideological fabric (discernible in the highly symbolic dramas by Stanisław Wyspiański, 1867 – 1907, namely *Klątwa* [Curse, 1899], *Sędziowie* [Judges, 1907] and, first and foremost, *Wesele* [The Wedding, staged 1901]; '[*Wesele*'s] powerful emotional impact,' says Czesław Miłosz, 'sparked a new era in Polish theater;'[83] also in Jan Kasprowicz's poetry, and a number of mature poems by Leopold Staff, 1878 – 1957, NB. betraying the latter's curious preference for the Apollinian, classicist poetic forms and genres, and whose poetics later exercised heavy influence on the Skamandrite poets).
- On a social level: it was Young Poland – as opposed to "bourgeois" Positivism – that introduced motifs and issues marking the beginning of new social consciousness, based on the concept, and exploring the issue, of con-

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[82] Hanna Filipkowska, "Z problematyki mitu w literaturze Młodej Polski" [Problems of Myth in the Literature of Young Poland] in: Hanna Kirchner and Zbigniew Żabicki (Eds.), *Problemy literatury polskiej lat 1890-1939* Vols. 1 & 2 (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1974) Vol. I, 221-252.

[83] Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1983) 356.

flicts between individuals (artists) and their hostile social environment (Wacław Berent: *Próchno* [Rotten Wood, 1903]).

- And, equally importantly, on the personal, intellectual level of artistic *praxis*: the Modernists broke free from the earlier, Positivist, post-Aristotelian mimetic theories of art. These theories presupposed that the author's work must reflect 'reality', but in a very special way – by choosing what is *true*. The Positivist artist was to *synthesise* an object from the existing parts, and to turn it into a generalised, uniform and familiar form, stressing the perfect similarity of the preselected categories of 'real' phenomena (and hence the overwhelming preponderance of narrative prose and journalistic forms among the Positivist writers). By contrast, the Modernists redefined the (now highly individualised) creative process by accepting the notion of the autonomy and superiority of the artist, presently required to cultivate art for its own sake (*l'art pour l'art*); by worshiping imagination (which now enjoyed a much heightened prestige), originality, spontaneity; and by acknowledging the transcendence of the æsthetic vision and its practical literary embodiment. Thus, this untamed spontaneity and "incoherence" dwell at Young Poland's aesthetical roots.

Not for nothing is Polish Modernism seen by many, and rightly so, as a movement with strong neo-romantic inclinations. It established its own rich—if fundamentally decadent and nihilist—"dark" tradition, against which the Polish Avant-garde of the post-First World War period stepped forth to strike a

blow. Yet one must also realise that of all of them, Polish Modernism, Young Poland, was probably the only Polish artistic movement, which from the very beginning kept abreast of progressive developments in Europe. Przybyszewski is a case in point. During his German years, and he spent part of his life in Germany and Norway, he enjoyed a tremendous reputation there as writer, thinker, scandalist and, last but not least, electrifying interpreter of Chopin's music – while drunk. While in Berlin and Norway, he belonged to the elite of the German-Scandinavian bohemian *milieu*, having met, and in some instances befriended, Richard Dehmel, Edvard Munch, August Strindberg, also Knut Hamsun, Henrik Ibsen, Theodor Kittelsen, Gustav Vigeland, Julie Wolfthorn, to mention just a few. By them he was influenced, no doubt about it – and influenced them in his turn. Today remembered chiefly for his outrageous lifestyle (making any debauched rock or rap star, be it male or female, look like a well-behaved schoolchild), his importance during that era is hard to overestimate and must be taken and considered seriously.

[II.9] As noted before, like the Modernists before them, who turned violently against the Positivist tradition, now the representatives of the newest schools turned against their most immediate predecessors, the Modernists themselves, although there was one exception in this negative attitude, this exception being Polish Expressionism. This is completely understandable, for clear traces of the Expressionistic poetics are already found in many Modernist works, especially

those by Przybyszewski, Kasprowicz (*Hymny* [Hymns], first published in two separate volumes in 1901 and 1902, respectively, and then in 1922 in a single volume), Berent (the novel *Żywe kamienie* [Living Stones], 1918). Quite naturally, Polish Expressionism emerged and developed within the sphere of German influences (German partition). Practically all leading Polish Expressionists, who hailed from the western part of the country, were fluently bilingual (for instance, many important works by Przybyszewski appeared originally in German, and only then their Polish translations followed). During the First World War, they began gravitating towards concepts presented by Przybyszewski, the leader of the movement, at least at the beginning. By 1917, they established an informal group, gathered round the literary-artistic biweekly, *Zdrój* [The Spring, 1917 – 1922].

Admittedly, Polish Expressionism was indebted to the Romantics, especially Juliusz Słowacki (1809 – 1849),[84] whose mysticism, or, rather, mystical evolutionism, had proven almost irresistible to Przybyszewski (*Ekspresjonizm – Słowacki i "Genezis z Ducha"* [Expressionism – Słowacki and "Genesis of the Spirit"], 1918) and others, namely Jerzy Hulewicz (1886 – 1941; *Ego eimi*, 1921 – a syncretic commentary on the Gospel of John, written in a hyper-expressive style) and the principal theoretician of the movement, Jan Stur (1895 – 1923;

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[84] 'If Mickiewicz inaugurated the Romantic movement in Poland, it was undoubtedly in Słowacki that it reached its apotheosis. Isolated, overflowing with imagination and wildly egocentric, he died at the age of thirty-nine of tuberculosis after a brief career that resulted in a body of work at once lyrical, dramatic and epic.' Francis Claudon, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Romanticism*. Translated by Susie Saunders (Secaucus, NJ: Chartwell Books, Inc., 1980) 236.

manifesto *Czego chcemy* [What We Want], 1920; *Na przełomie. O nowej i starej poezji* [At the Turning Point. Of Poetry New and Old], 1921).[85] In *Czego chcemy*, first published in *Zdrój*, Stur states boldly:

> Expressionism is a continuance of Romanticism.[86] It is its continuance, which means that it proceeds in the same direction as Romanticism, only farther, realising its postulates in a more consistent, *i.e.* more radical, way. "Faith and love," says Mickiewicz in his *Romantyczność* [The Romantic], "are more discerning than a wise man's lenses or learning."[87] Therefore that which is happening within me; that which I cannot see, hear, touch; that which is not detectable by the senses; that which I can only feel and that in which I believe, is more important, truer, loftier than all the incarnations of the outside, tangible world. The logical consequence of the exaltation of the soul over the world of material shapes, the exaltation of the internal feelings, reflections, passions which the senses cannot define, is the exaltation of truth over beauty... Until now, beauty was closely tied to the manifestations of the visible, tactile reality. Yet, as we have already underlined, for Expressionism—which is a metaphysical current—the outness is nothing when confronted with the inwardness. This is precisely why Expressionism may give up on beauty in the name of truth. This Expressionism does.[88]

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[85] The Romantics undermined the mechanistic concept of the orderly fashion in which divine providence organised Nature. As well, they did not hesitate to challenge philosophical materialism. Alternatively, Romanticism announced a specific return to spirituality in forms of—in the case of Adam Mickiewicz (1798 – 1855) and Juliusz Słowacki very likely Swedenborgian—mysticism, messianism, neo-Platonism (Plotinus), rediscovery of mediæval thought (theology) and, in extreme cases, pantheism. In the end, this sometimes led to the renewal of (mystical) Catholic beliefs, repeatedly tied to the contest between experiences of flesh and spirit, between pain, hell and the ultimate release and liberation. See: Anna Skoczek (Ed.), *Historia literatury polskiej. Romantyzm.* [The History of Polish Literature. Romanticism] Vol. V, Part II (Bochnia, Kraków, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SMS, 2006) 16, 35 ff.

[86] And as such, a continuance of Young Poland, from which it inherited much.

[87] In Polish: 'Czucie i wiara silniej mówi do mnie / Niż mędrca szkiełko i oko.' Translation based on Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, op. cit., 213.

[88] Jan Stur, *Czego chcemy* [What We Want], quoted in: Andrzej Lam, *Polska awangarda poetycka. Programy lat 1917 – 1923* [Polish Poetic Avant-garde. Programmes 1917 – 1923], Vols. I & II (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1969) Vol. II, 138: 'Ekspresjonizm jest dalszym ciągiem Romantyzmu.

Jest dalszym ciagiem: tzn. jest dążeniem idącym w tym samym, co Romantyzm, kierunku, jeno że dalej, spełniając jego postulaty w sposób bardziej konsekwentny, a tym samym bardziej radykalny. „Czucie i wiara – powiada Mickiewicz w *Romantyczności* – silniej mówią do mnie niż mędrca szkiełko i oko". Czyli to, co się we mnie dzieje, czego dostrzec, usłyszeć, dotknąć się, żadnym zmysłem uchwycić nie mogę, co jedynie odczuwam i w co wierzę, jest rzeczą ważniejszą, prawdziwszą, wznioślejszą niż wszystkie objawy zewnętrznego, dotykalnego

As opposed to the sometimes impossibly ecstatic Przybyszewski and Hulewicz, Stur remained a 'typical literary critic and creator of programmes,'[89] who tried to establish a theoretical platform for the movement. His premature death of tuberculosis prevented him from fully achieving this goal.

All in all, Polish Expressionism suffered from the same syndrome as its German counterpart (and model). Its verbose rhetorical exaggeration; its ecstatic, overly expressive, even pathetic diction; its deformed lexis making unrestrained use of contrast, hyperbole, grotesquerie and caricature; its contempt for form; its 'particularly unfortunate symbiosis of tradition and innovation' – constituted exactly that group of literary attributes against which Poland's new poets generally revolted.[90] Today, most probably only two poets and prose writers associated with the movement are still read: Józef Wittlin (1896 – 1976) and the extraordinarily prolific Emil Zegadłowicz (1888 – 1941). Interestingly, the latter's evolution, leading his version of Expressionism towards regionalism (both thematically and linguistically), folk inspirations and stylisations, also Franciscan motifs, brought him very close to the (former) Futurists such as

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świata. Konsekwencją logiczną wywyższenia duży, wewnętrznych, nie podpadających pod zmysły uczuć, rozmyślań, namiętności itd. ponad świat materialnych kształtów jest wywyższenie prawdy ponad piękno... Piękno było potąd ściśle związane z objawami widzialnej, dotykalnej rzeczywistości. A jak już zaznaczyliśmy, dla ekspresjonizmu jako proądu metafizycznego, zewnętrzność wobec wewnętrzności jest niczym. Przeto nader łatwo może z piękna w imię prawdy zrezygnować.

Czyni to ekspresjonizm.'

[89] Jerzy Kwiatkowski, *Dwudziestolecie międzywojenne*, op. cit., 15.

[90] Ibidem, 82. See also: Sławomir Żurawski (Ed.), *Literatura polska. Encyklopedia PWN.*, op. Cit., 177-178.

Bruno Jasieński.[91]

[II.10] It must be emphasised that although Polish Futurism came into view with full force right after the First World War, along with several other progressive movements (or, rather, groups), the whole process of its formation had begun much earlier ("earlier" by the 20th Century Avant-garde standards), around 1914, when Jerzy Jankowski (1887 – 1941) adopted Futurist poetics and published his first poems, imbued with a new literary spirit. Jankowski was a very curious and colourful character. Born in Wilno/Vilnius, he attended a gymnasium there, but was expelled due to his behaviour and personal principles. He moved to Kronstadt where he finally obtained his gymnasium diploma in 1904. Then he entered university in St. Petersburg, joined the Polish Socialist Party [Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, PPS] and took part in the 1905 Revolution. During the Revolution, the party delegated him to Łódź, a large industrial centre, where he worked clandestinely as an agitator among the proletariat. For that, the Czarist government banished him from the Empire and subsequently Jankowski spent some time abroad, first in Germany, then France. Back home at last, in 1911 he received a degree in law, awarded him by the university in Tartu (Estonia; then known under the German name of Dorpat and situated within the borders of the Russian Empire). Earlier, in 1906, he turned to journalism, from then on his main profession, and began to write and

[91] Kwiatkowski, op. cit., 82-86.

publish columns and reviews in *Gazeta Wileńska* [The Wilno Gazette], where also his first poems appeared. As a journalist, he wrote a lot and was able to make a living contributing to numerous journals and magazines. In 1912, he founded his own paper, *Tydzień* [The Week], which survived until 1913 (twenty-seven issues appeared between November 1912 and May 1913). Among *Tydzień*'s contributors were some of the leading intellectuals, critics and writers of the day, namely Jan Lemański (1866 – 1933), Bruno Winawer (1883 – 1944), Boleslaw Leśmian (1878 – 1937), Stanisław Baczyński (1890 – 1939), and Zygmunt Kisielewski (1882 – 1942). Like most Polish avantgardists a few years later, enthusiastic about Walt Whitman, whom they considered one of their spiritual fathers, Jankowski published his poems, too.[92]

An adamant social democrat throughout his life, Jankowski was a vocal proponent of newest tendencies and artistic trends and an uncompromising critic of Polish Modernism, the aforementioned Young Poland. His manifesto-like editorial in the first issue of *Tydzień* brings up the following statement, in which he mockingly quotes Polish Modernist poets' stock-in-trade metaphors:

> It scares me to think that, without asking any one's permission life creates new shapes and new values, and yet we are still stuck in the same "mud of tears," we are still draped in the same "sighs of mist." It scares me to think to what extent that inert, passive, outdated form of life took us in possession, imposing upon us commonplace rigours of behaviour, made so abhorrently banal by the hopeless sterility of dozens of years.[93]

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[92] Zbigniew Jarosiński, Helena Zaworska, op. cit., XV-XVII.

[93] Quoted in Andrzej Lam, op. cit., Vol. I, 55: 'Strach pomyśleć, że życie nowe tworzy kształty i nowe wartości, niie pytając nikogo o pozwolenie, a my wciąż grzązniemy w tym samym „błocie z łez", wciąż spowijamy się w te same „westchnienia mgły". Strach pomyśleć, jak inercyjna,

Jankowski, the lonely pioneer of Polish Futurism, as it were, 'the tragic forerunner and John the Baptist of Polish Futurism,'[94] and yet today almost an utterly forgotten figure, introduced to the (progressive) Polish letters notions such as negative critique of tradition and traditional values, both social and artistic (as already noted, he was especially fond of chastising the Modernists, with very few exceptions to the rule); appreciation of the modern, industrial societies, with their masses and mass movements (he glorified and at the same time feared the power of modern collectives, which in this respect places him between the Futurists and the Expressionists);[95] close connection with the present day civilisation and its evolutionary mechanisms (as expressed in his press publications and poems); fascination with modern technology (telegraph, cinematograph, electric clocks and signboards, aviation); idealisation of urban living and its intricate philosophy (he complained about the backwardness of his native Lithuania, which 'had only a presentiment of urbanism, neohumanism and cosmic consciousness – the components of Futurism');[96] creative activism (vs. the passivity of Polish authors as he knew them and understood their work); aggressive propagation of new artistic modes of self-expression (as opposed to the stale, self-perpetuating repertoire of the Modern-

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bierna, przestarzała forma życia owładnęła nami, narzucając nam utwrte rygory postępowania, zbanalizowane aż do obrzydzenia przez beznadziejną jałowość dziesiątków lat.'

[94] Bruno Jasieński, "Futuryzm polski (Bilans)" [Polish Futurism (Summary)] in: Eadem (Edward Balcerzan, Ed.), *Utwory poetyckie, manifesty, szkice* [Poetic Works, Manifestoes, Sketches] (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1972) 231. In her fundamental book, *The Poetic Avant-garde in Poland 1918 – 1939*, Bogdana Carpenter allots Jankowski five lines.

[95] Andrzej Lam, op. cit., 58.

[96] Quoted in Zbigniew Jarosiński, Helena Zaworska, op. cit., 83.

ists whom he accused of formalism, and as opposed to other, even more conservative artistic orientations); appreciation both of the lower strata of contemporary society and culture (which he first noticed in Whitman's poetry, and which he sometimes tried to capture in his own, featuring workers, shady characters and revolutionaries alike, as in his best known poem, *Tram wpopszek ulicy* [A Tram Akross the Street; here the noun "tram" is used as a synecdoche denoting a makeshift barricade: a heaved down tramcar is so used by the revolutionary workers who hide behind it]) and, finally, unbending, uncompromising identification with the political left.

His first futurist poems were published in *Widnokrąg* [The Horizon]: the date of 30 May 1914 may be considered the birthday of Polish Futurism. On that day, in issue 22 of *Widnokrąg*, Jankowski published his seminal *Spłon lotnika* [The Aviator Burning], a poem betraying fascination with newest technology (and not just aviation), written phonetically, full of neologisms and strangely refreshing imagery (at least by the standards of Polish poetry of the period) – and gripping, as it dealt with a catastrophe in the air: the engine bursts into flames, consuming the life of a heretofore happy, haughty and carefree aviator. Two weeks later, also in *Widnokrąg*, another poem appeared, *Maggi*, a demoniac 'rhapsody' to the overwhelming, mercantile nature of the modern city (the title denotes the name of popular liquid spice, a sort of soy sauce). These two poems, initially unnoticed and at best met with indifference

as novelty for novelty's sake,[97] marked the true beginning of Polish Futurism. These and other poems by Jankowski, who signed his futurist texts in a truly futurist manner as Yeży Yankowski, were then collected in 1919 (dated 1920) in the only volume of his poetry and prose, which ever appeared, entitled *Tram wpopszek ulicy. Skruty prozy i poemy* [A Tram Akross the Street. Prose Abrijments and Poems].[98] They are now rather reluctantly admitted to the canon of Polish Futurism (Jankowski has never been considered a poet of repute and even today, in the narrative that is Polish literature, he still remains a footnote rather than a part of the main text body).

He lived the way he wrote - intensely. His Bohemianism finally caught up with him. Suffering from acute alcohol addiction, in 1921 Jankowski went insane and spent the rest of his life in an asylum. As a consequence, he was never able to take full part in the Futurist movement in Poland, the movement that he, in fact, singlehandedly founded and ceaselessly promoted. In 1941, he was killed by the Nazis with the phenol injection into his heart, yet another victim of the notorious Aktion T4, which targeted people with mental disabilities.

[II.11] As already demonstrated, '[i]n 1918 Polish literature was no longer restrained by either external or internal bonds and it acquired a new vitality. The period between the two world wars was a true literary renaissance, a time of

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[97] '(...) Jankowski's early poems were isolated and passed almost without response.' Bogdana Carpenter, *The Poetic Avant-garde in Poland 1918 – 1939* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1983) 3.

[98] Zbigniew Jarosiński, Helena Zaworska, op. cit., XVIII.

animated poetic and artistic discussion, new poetic movements and programs, and outlandish experiments in the novel and theatre.'[99] The adjective "outlandish" may well be applied to the entire campaign of Polish Futurists, their manifestoes, poetry, prose and theatre.

[ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: There was no Polish Futurist painting, or sculpture *per se*, that experimenting rôle in visual arts being assumed by the Formists, established in 1917 in Kraków as Ekspresjoniści Polscy [Polish Expressionists]; then the name of the group was twice changed, first, in 1919, to Formiści Polscy [Polish Formists – by then, they were conscious of their—very real, in fact—independence from the rest of the "Avant-garde" Europe], and shortly afterwards to, simply, Formiści [Formists, 1919 - 1924], an interesting collective known for its, quickly abandoned or radically transformed, flirtations with Expressionism, and subsequently, Cubism (painting) and Futurism (poetry and prose). The Formiści, one of the unnoticed groups of the European progressive currents (which they do not deserve) were in their best works arguably equal to the French Avant-garde of the period – Delaunay, Duchamp, Léger, Villon. Some of their works are truly astonishing. Among the members of the Formiści the most notable (or notorious) were the brilliant philosopher, logician, mathematician, theoretician, painter and writer, Leon Chwistek (1884 – 1944);[100] the

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[99] Bogdana Carpenter, op. cit., xiii.

[100] His theory of a plurality of realities in art [the treatise *Wielość rzeczywistości w sztuce*, published in the periodical *Maski* [The Masks], Nos. 1-4, between January and February 1918] was one of the most original contributions to the European 20th Century æsthetics. In it, Chwistek argued that mutually exclusive multiple realities—reality of things, reality of physical percep-

Pronaszko brothers (Zbigniew, 1885 – 1958 and Andrzej, 1888 – 1961), whose paintings firmly remain a part of the Polish avant-garde canon; the aforementioned Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy), in addition to his work as dramatist also a superb painter, novelist and philosopher (like Chwistek); the highly original sculptor, August Zamoyski (1893 – 1970, the closest to the Futurist style in visual arts of them all); as well as the future Futurist (pun intended), Tytus Czyżewski (1880 – 1945), like most of the leading Formists a true Renaissance man: painter, art theoretician, poet, playwright, and the Editor-in-Chief of their periodical, *Formiści* (1919 – 1921), in which practically all Polish Futurists: Bruno Jasieński (1901 – 1938), Stanisław Młodożeniec (1895 – 1959), Anatol Stern (1899 – 1968), Aleksander Wat (1900 – 1967) published their works.]

After having left in 1914, Tadeusz Peiper, an atheist Polish Jew with both a socialist and an irredentist past, and who considered himself Polish, returned in 1921, a man bent on making his mark as a writer. His task was a difficult one. Had he returned right after the Great War, he would have been immediately able to take part in the literary revolution which was happening right at that moment; several literary groups and orientations appearing in quick succession, sometimes simultaneously, and changing Polish literature as well as literary mentality dramatically – and forever. 'Never before,' says Andrzej Zawada,

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tion, reality of senses (psychological reality), and imaginative reality, that of artistic or religious nature—co-exist and justify their projection onto, and existence of, four types of art, *i.e.*, primitive, realist, impressionist, and visionary (imaginative, experimental). See: Artur Hutnikiewicz and Andrzej Lam (Eds.), *Literatura polska XX wieku. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny* [Polish Literature of the 20th Century. Encyclopædical Guide] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2000) 93.

'and never after there happened in the sphere of Polish culture a period of such rich literary life.'[101] Peiper's late arrival was a major hindrance in the intended process of establishing himself as a force to be reckoned with. In other words, he missed a train. The only thing he could initially do was to join, and not to found, a movement, which was far cry from what he desired. In the remarks closing his collection of essays, *Tędy* [This Way], he describes the situation as follows, stressing out his disappointment at the rather conservative character of the occurring changes:

> After my several years' compulsory stay in Spain, where I was imprisoned first by the fronts of war, and then by the lack of money to pay for the return trip, I came back to Poland in 1921. The situation I encountered I could not have foreseen. The motherland was free, but it was only freedom of soil. The future, charmingly spacious, was waiting to be filled up, but only politics stepped into its heart, and merely by small steps. I was under the impression that only the old writers comprehended that the new situation of Poland should inspire serious changes in literary attitudes. The many signs I saw convinced me that writers such as Żeromski or Nowaczyński awaited rapid change, breakthrough, even upheaval. They expected the young to do it, because they believed in the novelty of youth. But they only listened to the first young throats that sang literature – and it turned out to be an act of self-healing, because it soon became obvious that what those first young writers wrote was not much younger than their own writings.[102] They accepted this with relief, as a pleasing proof of their own, lasting importance. And save for the Pieńkowski's cry, no other voice of dissent would have broken the silence, had the silence not been broken by a more and more frequent knocking on the door.
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> Round the table of literary work, [Peiper continues], chair after chair would empty; then, without asking any one's permission, new people were taking the seats. I began to distinguish their faces: Bruno Jasieński, Stanisław Młodożeniec, Tytus Czyżewski, Anatol Stern, Alek-

[101] Andrzej Zawada, *Dwudziestolecie literackie* [Twenty Years in Literature] (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1997) 7.

[102] Here Peiper makes a very clear allusion to the wildly successful Skamander group, whose main members, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Jan Lechoń (Leszek Serafinowicz), Julian Tuwim and Antoni Słonimski, had their debuts already during the war. Despite having lost much influence in the 1930s, the group still dominated the landscape of Polish literature until the Second World War.

sander Wat. One chair tripped over making another kind of noise: that was Boy [Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński] who made room generously for Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz.

A bit of independent judgement would suffice for one to realise that in these people resided a corpus of accumulated abilities which had no match in Poland at the time. And a bit of perspicacity would suffice to understand them and to appreciate everything they had to say. After my first contacts with them, I felt that at this literary juncture they were my closest allies among Polish writers. Their innovations fulfilled one of the intentions I had brought with me to Poland. Unbelievers, do not cock your eyes, do not rejoice! Although I formed my ideas abroad, they were not from abroad. I had had them in me for a long time. In my youth, I had to follow dicta of my own nature, my own instincts, inclinations; I had to avoid the art which was worshipped round me, in order to be able later on, in my mature years, to give birth to new thought and a new world. What I had encountered abroad only confirmed my intuitions. And if what I had encountered taught me a lesson, it was a lesson different from what our domestic importers of ideas imagine. My confession may sound cocky, yet I can say that neither in Germany nor France did I want to enquire about the mystery of how great cultures emerge. Unlike many of my compatriots I did not travel to Berlin or Paris to buy some new ideas there, but to become familiar with processes of creating laboratories of ideas, and to use these experiences in creating a laboratory of ideas back home. I did not want to tear down branches, I wanted to learn how the forests grow.

When I returned, Witkiewicz and the Futurists gave me courage, without which my literary journey would have looked differently, perhaps. To me, their existence was the best proof of the country's potential for renewal. In my opinion, the modes of Futurist initiatives signified deep changes within the Polish man. The surface always mimics the depths.

The boldness of that group made it dear to me, and our conflicts – even dearer.[103]

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[103] Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 312-313. 'Po kilkuletnim przymusowym pobycie w Hiszpanii, gdzie więził mnie jako krakowianina fron wojenny, a potem brak pieniędzy na podróż powrotną, wróciłem do kraju w r. 1921. Zastałem sytuację nie przewidywaną. Kraj był wolny, lecz była to tylko wolność ziemi. Przyszłość, uroczo przestronna, oczekiwała wypełnień, lecz w jej wnętrze wkraczała tylko polityka i tylko krokami krótkimi. Że z nowego losu Polski powinny wyniknąć dla literatury następstwa zasadnicze, to, zdawało mi się, odczuwali najgłębiej literaci starzy, i wiele oznak skłaniało mnie do przypuszczenia, że bardziej niż ktokolwiek inny, taki Żeromski czy taki Nowaczyński oczekiwali raptownej przemiany, przełomu, nawet przewrotu. Oczekiwali go od młodych, bo wierzyli w nowość młodości. Lecz zasłuchali się tylko w pierwsze młode gardła które zbliżyły się do literatury, czym dokonali wobec samych siebie czynu wysoce zdrowotnego, bo, gdy wkrótce okazało się, że pisarstwo tych pierwszych młodych wcale nie jest tak bardzo młodsze od ich własnego, mogli przyjąć to z ulgą, jako przyjemny dowód swej trwającej wartości. I prócz krzyku Pieńkowskiego żaden inny głos swaru nie przedzierałby ciszy, gdyby nie kruszył jej coraz częstszy stuk.

How characteristic this passage of Peiper's writing and of his personality!

[II.12] Arriving too late to be able to stand at the helm of a movement, Peiper joined those whom he considered ideologically closest: the Futurists and Formists. So, initially he was very briefly associated with these two groups, in whose magazine *Nowa Sztuka* [The New Art, 1921-22] he participated as a member of the editorial board. Already in the 1920s and 1930s, it had been repeated almost *ad nauseam* that Polish Futurism was nothing but a derivative, mechanical, thoughtless imitation of its Russian and Italian models, more of a fashionable whim (or a whim *against* the current fashion), rather than a seri-

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Dokoła stołu pracy literackiej opadało krzesło po krześle; nie pytając nikogo o pozwolenie, siadali na nich ludzie nowi. Gdy zacząłem rozróżniać twarze: Bruno Jasieński, Stanisław Młodożeaniec, Tytus Czyżewski, Anatol Stern, Aleksander Wat. Jedno z krzeseł opadło ze stukiem nieco odmiennym: to Boy szlachetnie robił miejsce Stanisławowi Ignacemu Witkiewiczowi.

Wystarczało trochę niezależności sądu, aby uznać, że w tych ludziach skupiły się zdolności, od których współcześnie nie było w Polsce większych, i wystarczało trochę przenikliwości, aby ich zrozumieć i docenić we wszystkich wystąpieniach. Po pierwszym zetknięciu z nimi odczułem, że chwila literacka czyni mi ich spośród pisarzy polskich najbliższymi. Nowatorswem swym spelniali jedną z idej, które wiozłem ze sobą do kraju. Mrugacze, nie cieszcie się; moje idee, choć wiezione z zagranicy, nie były ideami zagranicy. Miałem je już dawno w sobie. Trzeba było z nakazów wlasnej natury, z odruchów, z popędów, stronić w latach chłopięcych od sztuki, którą wokół wielbiono, aby potem w wieku dojrzałości rodzić nową myśl i nowy świat. Zagranica była dla mnie głównie świadectwem słuszności moich popędów. A jeśli była także nauką, to inną niż to sobie wyobrażają importerzy. Choć szumieć będzie moje wyznanie, nie mogę powiedzieć, że zarówno w Niemczech, jak i we Francji, badałem tajemnicę powstawania wielkich kultur. W odróżnieniu od wielu moich ziomków, nie jechałem do Berlina czy paryża po to, aby tam zakupić jakąś nową idejkę, lecz by poznać powstawanie laboratoriów ideowych i to poznanie zużytkować potem w kraju przy tworzeniu krajowej pracowni idej. Nie oberwanie gałązki było celem mojej podróży, lecz wiedza o tym, jak rosną lasy.

Gdy wróciłem, Witkiewicz i futuryści dodali mi odwagi, bez której moja droga literacka wyglądałaby może inaczej. Ich istnienie brałem za najlepszą podstawę odnowicielskich możliwości kraju. Modusy futurystycznej działalności stały mi się oznaką głębokich przemian dokonywujących się w polskim czlowieku. Powierzchnia jest zawsze mimiką głębi.

Śmiałości tej grupy czyniły mi ją bliską, a starcia z nią coraz bliższą.'

ous, legitimate striving for broadening the array of concepts within the primarily conservative Polish literary landscape. Karol Irzykowski, the critic as controversial as he was influential, lashed out the Futurists (and others, including the Skamadrites) in his much discussed article, *Plagiatowy charakter przełomów literackich w Polsce* [On the Plagiarist Nature of the Literary Breakthroughs in Poland], in which a relatively small number of nattily selected examples served the author to demonstrate "plagiarist" aspects of Polish literature, apparently making frequent use of motifs and tropes found in Cocteau, Mayakovski, Severyanin and even earlier writers.[104] The feared Karol Wiktor Zawodziński (1890 – 1949)[105] concurred, pointing to the imitative nature of Jasieński's poetry and naming Blake, Cendrars, Yesenin, Mayakovski and Severyanin among the poets whom he followed.[106] Stefan Żeromski added a stinging gloss to Irzykowsk's argument in his essay, *Snobizm i postęp* [Snobbery and Progress],[107] by accusing Futurist experimentations within the language as destructive, and which he contrasted with the richness of the folk idiom (various

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[104] Karol Irzykowski (Zofia Górzyna, Ed.), *Słoń wśród porcelany (Studia nad nowszą myślą literacką w Polsce) / Lżejszy kaliber* [An Elephant in a China Shop (Studies on the More Recent Literary Ideas in Poland) / Lighter Calibre] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1976). This is a collection of Irzykowski's articles, essays, critics and polemics which were published in magazines and separate tomes during his life (d. 1944). The original edition of *Słoń wśród porcelany* appeared in 1934.

[105] Feared more for his personal temperament and military background—he was a cavalry captain, highly decorated during the Polish-Soviet war—rather than his rigorous, indeed often uncompromising and unforgiving, critical style.

[106] Karol Wiktor Zawodziński, "Poezja Polski Odrodzonej" [Poetry of Poland Reborn] in: *Wśród poetów* [Among the Poets] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1964) 11. See also his "Awangarda, jej apogeum i likwidacja" [The Avant-garde, Its Apogee and Liquidation] in the same volume, 185-190.

[107] Stefan Żeromski, "Snobizm i postęp" [Snobbery and Progress] in: *Pisma Stefana Żeromskiego. Pierwsze wydanie zbiorowe. Utwory publicystyczne* [Writings of Stefan Żeromski. First Collected Edition. Journalism] (Warszawa - Kraków: Wydawnictwo J. Mortkowicza, 1926).

Polish dialects), in his opinion an inexhaustible source and inspirational well of fresh lexical solutions. Experimentations were allowed insofar as they did not violate the integrity of the native tongue. Most of his selected negative examples were taken from Russian Futurism, Mayakovski the main culprit, but also from Jasieński as an illustration of the domestic variety of the disease. The leading Skamandrite (in fact, all of the Skamandrites were generally considered "leading"), Julian Tuwim, gloated over the demise of Futurism: 'Then, luckily, "the Skamandrite little epigones" went on to victory and put to silence all the apostles of primitive boorishness, who wanted to urinate over Poland "in all colours" and, while "parlancing in Sarmatian," planned to "farspread loftherapy,"' and eventually, he continued, '"polluted the young poetry of the independent Poland."'[108]

Zbigniew Jarosiński disagrees: 'Oftentimes, critics wrote that Polish Futurism was a belated phenomenon. It does not seem to be true. Yes, it surfaced later than Italian and Russian Futurism, but if it had emerged a few years earlier, it would have probably remained an ephemeral literary fashion. Yet it became an all-encompassing artistic movement, something socially important

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[108] Julian Tuwim, "Odpowiedź recenzentom" [My Response to the Critics] in: *Wiadomości Literackie*, 1937, No, 47: '"Skamanderskie epigończyki" zwyciężyły wówczas na szczęście i zmusiły do milczenia apostołów gradiuszczego chama, którzy zamierzali obsikać Polskę "we wszystkich kolorach" i "parlowacąc sarmaceniem" "porozwszechniać wzdaleczenia."' The famous Futurist manifesto (in the form of a leaflet), *Nuż w bżuhu* [The Nyfe in the Stomak, Kraków-Warszawa, November 1921] began with the joyful desire: 'We wan' to piss IN OLL KOLORS!' [Hcemy szczać WE WSZYSTKIH KOLORAH!] These expressions ("parlancing in Sarmatian" and "farspreading loftherapy") are attempts to translate Polish Futurist neologisms into acceptable English approximations.

and causing fierce debates, for in Poland the issues it addressed assumed actuality exactly in the early 1920s."[109]

One may easily oppose Jarosiński's optimistic statement. After all, Polish Futurism was much shorter-lived than the older, Italian, Russian or Ukrainian, branches of the movement, and yet as voraciously impatient and aggressive in the act of building its own legend – it is easy to see now why to some it *did* look like it was 'an ephemeral literary fashion,' artificially sown on Polish literary soil. Also, if truth be told, what does not seem accurate is to maintain that Polish Futurism 'became an all-encompassing artistic movement, something socially important.' Controversies it did cause, discussions it did instigate, public disturbances it did inspire[110] – but it would be far-fetched to attribute to it

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[109] Zbigniew Jarosiński, "Wstęp" in: Eadem, Helena Zaworska (Eds.), *Antologia polskiego futuryzmu i Nowej Sztuki*, op. cit., LXXXII: 'Wielokrotnie pisano..., że futuryzm polski był zjawiskiem spóźnionym. Nie wydaje się to jednak prawdą. Był późniejszy niż futuryzm włoski i rosyjski, ale gdyby pojawił się o parę lat wcześniej, pozostałby zapewne efemeryczną modą literacką. Jeżeli stał się całym ruchem artystycznem, czymś społecznie ważnym i budzącym gwałtowne kontrowersje, to dlatego, że problematyka, którą przynosił uzyskała w Polsce prawdziwą aktualność właśnie w początku lat dwudziestych.'

[110] For instance, in Warsaw on 11 December 1919, Stern was arrested and spent time in prison, for committing "blasphemy" during his earlier performance in Wilno/Vilnius, on 15 and 16 November of that year. Several distinguished writers, including Wacław Berent, Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski, Leopold Staff, Stefan Żeromski as well as the Skamandrites, wrote a letter of protest on Stern's behalf. The latter was only cleared of charges on 14 January 1922. See: Zbigniew Jarosiński, "Wstęp" in: Eadem, Helena Zaworska (Eds.), *Antologia polskiego futuryzmu i Nowej Sztuki*, op. cit., XXXIX. Those "blasphemous" lines which so horrified the audience and the press are found in Stern's *Uśmiech Primavery* [The Smile of Primavera] and go as follows:

And God himself, bowing like a lackey,
Will serve me in state
In a wine glass on a golden plate
Aromatic and full-bodied Tokay.

In Polish:

A na tacy złotej
Z ukłonem sam Bóg, jak lokaj,
Aromatyczny, soczysty
W kieliszku poda mi tokaj.

some disproportionately huge influence on Poland's artistic community and society *en masse*.

What Oleh Ilnytzkyj says about the Ukrainian Futurists could be applied to the Kraków Avant-garde, not to the Futurists in Poland. In the young Soviet Union art was, to a great extent, a matter of ideology. Therefore, the progressive (Soviet) artists, including the Ukrainian Futurists, almost invariably associating themselves with the radical Left, were required by the circumstances to reveal, motivate and justify their goals, their æsthetics and their social *raison d'être* in a precise and ideologically convincing manner, although often, it must be admitted, they were not free from youthful dash, panache and exuberance, so irritating to their adversaries. To them, facing the increasingly brutal force of the totalitarian system, it was of great importance to be intelligible at least in their theoretical statements. In the end, it was all about survival, physical survival that is, no longer the æsthetic one.[111] 'No literary group of the 1920s,' says Ilnytzkyj, 'devoted more attention, nor attached greater significance, to theoretical pursuits than the Futurists. This tenacious determination to articulate a systematic vision of art and culture sometimes gives the impression that theorizing about art was almost as important to the futurists as creating it.'[112]

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[111] 'The 1930s, of course, were not just a disaster for the Futurists. They were a tragedy for many writers and for all of Ukrainian culture... When writers, like Mykola Bazhan, turned to writing odes to Stalin during this terrible period, they were no longer engaged in literature but in the art of survival... [I]n 1937 both Semenko and Shkurupii, the "king of the Futurist prairies," died before firing squads. Ironically, among Shkurupii's last published words were these: "Our creativity is prospering like exuberant flowers, for it is guided by the hand of our Party."' Oleh Ilnytzkyj, *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914-1930. A Historical and Critical Study*, op. cit., 178.

[112] Ibidem, 181.

'The Futurists expected,' continues Ilnytzkyj, 'naively in retrospect, that a rationally articulated theory would convince politicians to elevate avant-garde principles to the level of official policy. Futurist theorizing, in short, had a messianic element."[113]

To return to Jarosiński's affirmative appraisal of Polish Futurism (which was "messianic" but not as well versed in formalist theory as the Ukrainian, and which was its inherent weakness, despite some scattered articles of a less chaotic nature than the Polish Futurist manifestoes themselves): although its details may be reinterpreted and objected to, in principle his evaluation of the movement was accurate. Polish Futurism exploded creatively exactly when the literary scene in Poland needed it to join the fray. Its project—the wholesale overhaul of the basic philosophical, æsthetic, cultural and social notions of art, associated with the heretofore unbroken tradition, understood in evolutionary rather than revolutionary terms—proved inspirational and, to some extent, highly productive.[114] Polish Futurism offered a number of corrections to the model established by the Italians, Russians, and Ukrainians. It demonstrated remarkable distaste for the Italianate worship of violence, war, chauvinism and rampant nationalism; it was (only cautiously) appreciative[115]—and at the same time mistrustful—of modern technology (as already shown in Jankowski's po-

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[113] Ibidem.

[114] Anatol Stern, "Niezwykła historia polskiego futuryzmu (1918 – 1968)" [The Extraordinary History of Polish Futurism (1918 – 1968)] in: *Głód jednoznaczności i inne szkice* [The Hunger for Univocality and Other Sketches] (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1972) 255.

[115] Helena Zahorska, "Futuryzm i jego ideologia" [Futurism and Its Ideology] in: *Głos Narodu* [The Nation's Voice], 1924, No. 216.

etry, clearly ambiguous in this regard); it centred its conceptual initiatives and creative efforts on making art available to the masses and making artists a part of the communal wholeness (the mass itself), suppressing their individualism for the sake of anonymity (here, Polish Futurists polemicised with their Russian counterparts, namely Mayakovski, accusing them of being too prone to succumbing to individualism, egomania);[116] it gradually introduced strong Leftist *topoi* into Polish letters, as well as fresh modes of looking at the peasant class and its social, historical and cultural ethos (in Jasieński, Młodożeniec); it unabashedly got hold of subjects which before were treated with restrain: sexuality (often vulgar), eroticism (even in its most disgusting forms),[117] religion; it also aimed at creating a new, dynamic poetic language, permeated with loose syntax and humorous, playful lexical figures taken from everyday language,[118] slang, local—both urban and rural—dialects, and was oblivious to classical narrative forms and genres (although the Futurists did write odes, ballades and cultivated simple strophic forms).[119] And although this multipronged attack at the literary convention lasted only four years (1919 – 1923), it gave impetus to both the conservative and Avant-garde camps for rethinking their condition and respective positions. Surprisingly perhaps, quite a few literary works from the

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[116] *Cf.* Edward Balcerzan, "FUTURYZM" in: Artur Hutnikiewicz and Andrzej Lam (Eds.), *Literatura polska XX wieku. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny*, op. cit., 179-180.

[117] One of Jasieński's poems, opening his *But w butonierce* [Boot in the Buttonhole, Warszawa-Kraków, 1921] begins with this, rather chilling, description of erotic experience: 'While kissing the ulcerous lips of my syphilitic lover it is good to listen to the sharp song of trams driving by...' [Całując owrzodzone palce mojej syfilitycznej kochanki dobrze jest słuchać ostrego śpiewu mijających tramwajów].

[118] Bogdana Carpenter, *The Poetic Avant-garde in Poland 1918 – 1929*, op. cit., 64.

[119] Ibidem, 179.

Polish Futurist period have entered the canon of Polish literature (regardless of which period we may consider), and quite a few of them (often almost untranslatable due to their experimental vocabulary) would enrich that of World Literature, especially its modern chapters. It is beyond dispute that works such as Alexander Wat's *Ja z jednej strony i Ja z drugiej strony mojego mopsożelznego piecyka* [I On One Side and I on the Other Side of My PugIron Stove, 'published in the autumn of 1919 (and inscribed with the date 1920)'][120] as well as his *namopaniki* [insistopanics, 'inspired by the *zaum* poetry created by the Russian futurist poet Velimir Khlebnikov'[121] (in Russian: Велими́р Хле́бников)] should be earnestly deemed as prefiguring Surrealism. The same pioneering position is allotted by the contemporary Polish literary scholarship to poems by Jasieński (Pieśń o głodźe – The Song About Hunger), Stern, and Młodożeniec, the latter particularly inventive in his explorations of provocative (in the traditional sense of the word) syllabic and rhythmic combinations, not to mention typography enhancing the perceptual experience (as in the famous poem, *Moskwa* [Moscow, 1921], clearly indicating, as do the *namopaniki*, his strong Dadaist affiliations).

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[120] Ibidem, 65.

[121] Ibidem, 75. '*Zaum* [заумь or заумный язык (zaumnyi yazyk), the term invented by another Russian poet, Aleksei Eliseevich Kruchenykh, in Russian: Алексей Елисеевич Крученых; P. G-M] was based exclusively on the sound value of words and consisted entirely of neologisms.' Ibidem.

[II.13] Peiper soon developed his own theory, largely at odds with the tendencies represented in writings by the Futurist, traditional (pro-Romantic, pro-folkloric), Classicist (Skamander) and some Expressionist critics (periodicals *Czartak*, *Ponowa*).[122] The sixth and final issue of the first series of Tadeusz Peiper's *Zwrotnica* [The Switch] offered an examination of the Futurists' achievement and its analytical evaluation. There, Peiper published one of his seminal texts, *Futuryzm (analiza i krytyka)* [Futurism (Analysis and Critique)].[123] Jasieński added an overview of Polish Futurism.[124] There were also original contributions from Marinetti (*Przyjaciołom z "Zwrotnicy"* [To My Friends in "Zwrotnica"][125] and Czyżewski (*Mój futuryzm* [My Futurism]).[126] The two texts by Peiper and Jasieński, in which, generally, negative critiques dominated the argument (Peiper's critique severe, Jasieński's almost sentimental), mark the end of Polish Futurism. Here, of singular interest is Peiper's text, as the one subjecting the competitive orientation to a exceptionally thorough, in-depth assessment, still valid after all the years that passed since its first appearance in print.

Peiper begins... from the beginning, with an enumeration of the Italian and Russian Futurist principles, which he succinctly elucidates. He distances himself from these principles, pointing out their destructive character, which re-

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[122] Stanisław Jaworski, "Przedmowa" [Foreword] in: Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy, Nowe usta*, op. cit., 7-10.
[123] *Zwrotnica*, No. 6, October 1923, 162-172.
[124] Ibidem, 177-184.
[125] Ibidem, 161.
[126] Ibidem, 185-186.

duces the concept of life into the most ordinary, primitive aspects. However, he also sees in Futurism a creative force, 'a powerful force of rebirth,' which may lead to positive transformations in social life, morality, and culture. 'Those who are capable of marshalling facts,' he says, 'ought to notice that our [Polish] futurism should be placed on that rebellious line of anti-Romantic opposition, which historic events have long ago begun to draw in our consciousness. In our Futurism there is both understanding **and approbation of new, worldwide cultural values**, which after 1863 [the fall of the January uprising] were defended by Positivism. There is in it **the apology for temporalness and for the code of deed**, which were developed by Wyspiański. There is in it **will to power**, with which Staff came forward."[127] Clearly, Peiper recognises Polish Futurism as a phenomenon both new and continuing certain traditions, namely Positivist and Modernist. He appreciates these attributes of the movement. Furthermore, he does not try to hide his indebtedness to Marinetti, who 'taught us what are **self-confidence and creative blasphemy**. He cut the umbilical cord with which we were tied to the womb of epochs past, and inserted into our mouths the full breasts of reality, which surrounds us. It is his

[127] Ibidem, 164. 'Ci, którzy umieją szeregować zjawiska, powinni dostrzec, że nasz futuryzm należy umiejscowić na buntowniczej linii opozycji anty-romantycznej, którą wypadki historyczne już dawno rozpoczęły kreślić w naszej umysłowości. Jest w nim zrozumienie i **aprobowanie nowych ogólnoświatowych walorów kulturalnych,** których po roku 63 bronił u nas pozytywizm. Jest w nim **apologia doczesności i kodeksu czynu,** którą rozijał Wyspiański. Jest w nim **wola siły,** z którą wystąpił Staff.'

great historic contribution."[128] However, this enthusiastic tribute soon gives way to a rather harsh critique, as concurrently Peiper does not hesitate to level a polemic with Marinetti's incorrect, and in the end harmful, æsthetic stance. He criticises negatively Marinetti's fetishisation of the machine, which should not be treated as an idol ('god Apis'), but only as an 'elongation, continuation of man' ['Maszyna jest dalszym ciągiem człowieka']. 'It is not matter that is of interest to us in an engine, it is man' ['**W motorze interesuje nas nie materia, lecz człowiek**'], says Peiper, explaining that it is truly impossible to eliminate man from literature: 'what will always interest man the most, is man' ['**Człowieka zawsze interesować będzie człowiek**'], which then leads him to accusing Futurism of destroying syntax and narrative logic. 'Without syntax we can only create an inventory of the world, but never will we be able to render life' ['**...bez składni możemy co najwyżej sporządzić inwentarz świata, ale nigdy nie zdołamy oddać życia świata**']. This is precisely why the literary work of art needs logic, order, and needs to focus on grammatically proper sentences as carriers of meaning. The literary work of art emerges through both elimination of undesired elements and composition. And therefore, Futurist æsthetics is flawed and unacceptable from the point of view of what modern literature in general, and poetry in particular, may require. Thus, Peiper does away with Futurism. The movement had its positives, yet at present, literature

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[128] Ibidem. '[Marinetti] nauczył nas co to jest **wiara w siebie oraz twórcze bluźnierstwo**. Przeciął pępowinę, którą przywiązani byliśmy do łona epok minionych, i dał nam w usta wezbrane piersi rzeczywistości, która nas otacza. To jego wielka historyczna zasługa.'

and visual arts call for other solutions more appropriate in regards to actual social and cultural demands. To sum up, Peiper's article is a rather cold farewell to Futurism and those with whom he at some point launched his campaign to reform Polish poetics.

[II.14] The frontline was finally drawn: that separating Peiper's *Zwrotnica* and the Kraków Avant-garde from the Skamander group, the two main poetic factions (survivors of the early literary struggle for primacy) that from then on dominated Poland's literary life. It was an unequal battle, or, rather, a long-drawn and hard-fought campaign, but in the end the David of the Kraków Avant-garde defeated the Goliath of the Skamander group, albeit posthumously.

Who were the Skamandrites? According to Barry Keane, the author of the first, and excellent, critical study on Skamander written in English,[129] 'The Skamander poets – Jan Lechoń [b. Leszek Serafinowicz, 1899 – 1956], Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz [1894 – 1980], Julian Tuwim [1894 – 1953], Kazimierz Wierzyński [1894 – 1969] and Antoni Słonimski [1895 – 1976] – are arguably the most important group of writers belonging to the era of inter-war years."[130] These five, as well as some of their – usually very talented – satellites, founded a tradition,

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[129] He calls them 'Skamanders,' which to my ears does not sound right, does not sound elegant enough. Therefore, here they are referred to as Skamandrites, or Skamandrite poets. My *licentia poetica*.

[130] Barry Keane, *Skamander. The Poets and Their Poetry 1918 – 1929* (Warszawa: AGADE, 2004), ix. The dates do not appear in the original text of the quote.

still cultivated in Poland, of poetry informed by the curious mixture of Classicist (or neo-Classicist) and Romantic ideals. Not arguably are they important! – they are still considered THE most important and influential poetic collective during the years 1918 – 1939. This they did – and did not deserve. They deserved it for they started very early, around 1916, ahead of any of the previously discussed literary groups, and immediately felt the pulse of the times, slowly reaping the fruits of irredentist efforts, and expressing that pulse in their, initially wholeheartedly positive, optimistic, even enthusiastic, poetry (with just a few exceptions). They deserved it for their personal brilliance (sense of humour, among others; also, due to their political sympathies some of the Skamandrites became high-ranking state officials) and craftsmanship: their poetic versatility, *i.e.* incredible familiarity with the Polish and European past literary tradition (idioms), and the resultant lexical and syntactical virtuosity (some of their *pastiche* poetries – like Tuwim's – are unsurpassed to this day), placed them effortlessly at the helm of the progressive Polish poetics. They deserved it because at the beginning they were open-minded, collaborating with the Expressionists and Futurists alike (not infrequently all three orientations were confused with one another), contributing to the emergence of a new literary paradigm, which would prevail in Polish poetics until the appearance of the Kraków Avant-garde (and even later). They deserved it because their contagious optimism gave the readers a very strong desire to follow current poetry and prose (how often is THIS a case today?) in order to find a valid interpreta-

tion of what was happening in the newly re-found land (and outside its borders), and giving the most acute actual problems a positive response. In a sense, the Skamandrites were the new Romantics who, nonetheless, substituted Romantic "whining" with playfulness and joy of living in an independent and victorious (Polish-Soviet war) country.

They may not have deserved it for all the above reasons either, but – more importantly – for their slavish attachment to the values which, so acutely analysed by Peiper in several texts, ultimately proved destructive, pursued shortsightedly. Says Keane:

> '[T]heir early poetry collectively greeted with joy, though also with a certain muted trepidation, the return of Poland's independence in 1918. For Poland, however, the years of celebration soon gave way to the everyday realities of economic, social and ideological struggles, not to mention the later looming shadow of fascism and eventual Nazi invasion of Poland. For this reason, history has judged the Skamanders' early hopes of a new beginning for Poland as over-optimistic and, perhaps worse, over-simplistic. These are the judgements of many of Poland's contemporary poets and critics – although, one would have to say that they have benefit in this instance of both distance and the lapse of time."[131]

Sure enough, but Peiper's severe evaluation of the Skamander group is as valid as it was during his most visionary creative period – bitter, negative.[132] And justified, as some of the Skamandrites became servants of the new, totalitarian system after 1945 (the ridiculously passive and coöperative Iwaszkiewicz is a case in point and also, to a certain extent, Tuwim and Słonimski, although

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[131] Ibidem.

[132] *Vide* his article, "Iwaszkiewicz idjota" [That Idiot Iwaszkiewicz] in: *Zwrotnica*, 1923, No. 4, 93; also: "Poeci bez idei poetyckiej" [Poets Without Poetic Ideas] in: *Wiek XX* [20th Century], 1928, No. 4 (22 April), quoted in: Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 277-281.

the latter after his return to communist Poland, did become a member of the Polish intellectual resistance).

[II.15] Being one of many was not what Peiper really wanted to accomplish. Gradually, he began to assume the rôle in which he saw himself right from the start – that of a leader. And hence his decision to establish a tribune for the new poetic and artistic ideas.[133] In 1922 he was ready. It is then that Peiper published his first poems and laid foundations for his theories. This opposition to the traditional school of thinking resulted in a series of articles and essays which he embarked on publishing as of May, 1922 in his own magazine *Zwrotnica*, his major editorial achievement, today unanimously considered the most important avant-garde publication in Poland between 1918 and 1939.

Bogdana Carpenter describes this process succinctly:

> As Polish futurism was coming to an end, a new group of poets formed in Cracow, to be known in the history of Polish literature as "The Cracow Avantgarde." Its strong orientation towards progress and civilization made it appear at first as a continuation of futurism, but in fact its interest in formal issues and its constructivism put it in opposition to futurism. Before these differences became crystallized, the futurists and Tadeusz Peiper, who was to become the main theoretician of the Avantgarde, collaborated in a short-lived magazine with the all-embracing title, the *New Art*. Two numbers appeared, in November 1921 and in February 1922, and they can be seen as a transition between futurism and the Cracow Avantgarde. The first editorial article stressed the elements common to both groups: opposition to the preceding movements of symbolism, impressionism and naturalism, the desire for new art to be innovative, the rejection of logic, and the search for a new kind of metaphor... At the same time, the poets who published in the *New Art* were almost without exception all futurists—Wat, Stern,

[133] Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 314-315.

Jasieński, Czyżewski—and their poetry was in contrast to the theoretical orientation of the magazine.

Similar eclecticism and hesitation, typical of a period of transition, characterized the first series of *Zwrotnica* (*The Switch*), the magazine of the newly formed Cracow group. The *Switch* was published in two series, the first comprising six numbers published between May 1922, and October 1923; the second, published after a three-year interval in 1926 and 1927, also had six numbers. In addition to being "the forge of the Polish avant-garde" as some critics called it, the *Switch* open its pages to many poets and art theoreticians whose premises were akin to those of the Cracow Avantgarde only in the most general way, often negative rather than positive... The artistic heterogeneity was especially true of its first series, where the overwhelming majority of authors belonged to artistic groups or movements other than the Cracow Avantgarde. The poet Tytus Czyżewski, the art theoretician and philosopher Leon Chwistek, the famous playwright and theorist Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, the sculptor August Zamoyski, were all associated with formism. The poets Stanisław Młodożeniec, Bruno Jasieński, Anatol Stern, and Aleksander Wat were futurists... Peiper, the founder and editor of the *Switch*, dominated it. It was owing to him that the *Switch* preserved a unity despite the diverse aesthetic attitudes of its various contributors; he was the soul of the magazine, the author of all its programmatic and most important theoretical articles.[134]

Peiper, as Aleksander Słapa tells us, 'was not only a writer, creator of a literary programme, and theoretician of new literature. As well, he was a publisher, editor-in-chief, make-up editor who developed *Zwrotnica*'s (typo)graphic image, distributor and reseller. In addition to the *Zwrotnica*, he also published volumes of his own and his colleagues' poetry. He personally promoted and sold them. Everything he did, beginning with the graphic design, was as carefully thought through and effective, as the form of his poetry and his programme were precise and effective. For almost ten years of Peiper's avant-garde activities, I had been invariably amazed by the logic of his argument and by the integrity of his personality in all its aspects: in his theories and outlook,

[134] Bogdana Carpenter, *The Poetic Avant-garde in Poland 1918-1939*, op. cit., 79-80.

his manners, intonation of his voice and his restrained gesticulation. One could sense that Peiper kept his distance, but this was offset by the gracefulness emanating from him."[135]

This is confirmed by Marian Piechal: '[I was introduced to Peiper] in 1929. It is just impossible to describe his physiognomy and charming manners. He simply enchanted with the finesse of his conversation, and it has to be emphasised that the ever-changing emotion of his eyes; his agile facial expression and movements of his lips; every suspension of his voice or change of its intonation; every motion of his hands, every time he opened them or clenched his fists, contributed to raising the temperature of the discussion and enforced the impact of his words, whose suggestiveness it was out of the question to try to resist. To part with Peiper without having been entirely convinced by his arguments was impossible. Therefore some deliberately avoided him. He either captivated or indisposed people towards himself. One had to become either his follower or his enemy. He always had to be the centre of attention, or, rather, not he – but his point of view on art and the world."[136]

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[135] Aleksander Słapa, "Oczami księgarza" [From the Bookseller's Perspective] in: Kornel Filipowicz, Kazimierz Bidakowski (Eds.), *Cyganeria i polityka* [The Bohemians and Politics] (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1964) 12-13.

[136] Marian Piechal, *Żywe źródła* [The Living Sources] (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1985) 369. '[...[W] roku 1929, poznałem także i ja Tadeusz Peipera.] Nie sposób opisać fascynującej jego fizjonomii i ujmującego sposobu bycia. Urzekał zaś wprost finezją prowadzonego z rozmówcą dialogu, przy czym zmienny co chwilę wyraz oczu, ruchliwa mimika ust i całej twarzy, zawieszenie głosu lub jego podniesienie, gest ręki wreszcie, zwarcie lub rozwarcie dłoni podnosiły temperaturę i dobitność słów, których sugestia była nieodparta. Niepodobieństwem było rozstać się z Peiperem nie będąc przez niego zupełnie przekonanym. Toteż niektórzy z rozmysłem go unikali. Zniewalał albo odstręczał. Trzeba było zostać jego zwolennikiem albo przeciwnikiem. Zawsze musiał być ośrodkiem zainteresowania – nie on, lecz jego pukt widzenia sztuki i współczesności.'

Adds Zygmunt Leśnodorski, who knew Peiper in the 1920s and 30s: 'Peiper did not appropriate the title of "commander-in-chef." He emphasised that it was not his ambition to command. Above all, he wanted to persuade: "not just with his articles but also with his mug."

'He liked to officiate in a café,[137] always surrounded by his adherents, over black coffee, sometimes over a chessboard, although he used to say that the only game worthy of intelligent person was a friendly conversation. Decidedly Mediterranean looks: dark complexion, black and dark blue curly hair, also the beard, which he brought from Spain, but later shaved, leaving the moustache. He conversed, or, rather, delivered his speeches energetically, in an interesting and brilliant way. But any discussion was *a priori* eliminated. He deeply believed in his infallibility, other people's opinions "as such" were of a very little interest to him. He did not try to feign modesty: "[N]obody knows poetry better than I," he wrote in the introduction to the complete edition of his poems, "and from the depths of my knowledge I assure you I am giving you poetic works which belong to the best the present time has to offer."[138] This double

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[137] Jan Brzękowski informs that Peiper's favourite coffeehouses were the famous "Esplanada," then "Udziałowa" and the Bisanz Café, later also Kawiarnia Plastyków [Artists' Café]. Jan Brzękowski, "Garść wspomnień o Peiperze" [A Handful of Memories About Peiper] in: *Poezja*, Year VI, No. 3(52), March 1970, 7.

[138] Tadeusz Peiper, "Przedmowa" [Foreword] to *Poematy*, op. cit., 30. 'A jednak nikt nie zna się na poezji lepiej ode mnie i z głębi tej wiedzy o rzeczy zapewniam was że daję wam utwory, które należą do najlepszych jakie stworzyła współczesność. Kiedy indziej nie napisałbym tego, dziś piszę.' See also Chapter IV.

megalomania was fully accepted by those persons who, as he wrote, "believed in and loved his poetry more than everything else.'"[139]

Jalu Kurek gives an account similar to Leśnodorski's: 'Pleasant, compact figure of a Frenchman or an Italian, dark complexion, his dress showing nonchalant elegance of a Paris Bohemian; pitch-dark eyes, thick hair, black moustache trimmed like a brush. Brilliantly intelligent."[140]

Tadeusz Kłak justly remarks that Peiper's elegant, conventional appearance was in opposition to the extravagant bearing of the Futurists, making him look similar to the less nonconformist literati and normal citizens. No wonder then, Kłak says, that his younger colleagues were often critical of Peiper; they recognised his "otherness." Some of them, such as Adam Ważyk, who obviously could not forgive Peiper for his "old-fashioned" dress and physical appearance as well as his elegant way of addressing interlocutors, perceived him as an almost anachronistic phenomenon![141]

Peiper's future biographers, if any, will have a mountain to climb before they are able to piece together the very limited available data on the personal side of his existence – virtually next to nothing is known about his private life. There are two photographs extant, which show Peiper in female company. Both Peiper and his partners captured in these photographs must have been

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[139] Zygmunt Leśnodorski, *Wśród ludzi mojego miasta. Wspomnienia i zapiski* [Among the People Of My City. Memoirs and Notes] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1968) 314.
[140] Jalu Kurek, *Zmierzch natchnienia. Szkic o poezji* [The Twilight of Inspiration. Sketches on Poetry] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1976) 175.
[141] Tadeusz Kłak, *Stolik Tadeusza Peipera. O strategiach awangardy* [Tadeusz Peiper's Table. Sketches on Avant-garde Strategies] (Kraków: Oficyna Literacka, 1993) 34.

pretty close, for they hold hands; one of the partners even embraces him. Jan Brzękowski mentions a certain Ms. B., with whom Peiper had a relationship, but admits to the absolute lack of a more detailed knowledge of the 'purely personal' sphere of Peiper's life.[142] Apparently, the poet was always on guard there, adamant in protecting his privacy. That he disliked the institution of marriage, that he was a bit of a misogynist (or, perhaps better, a bit of a male chauvinist), that he tended to treat the female body as an object of pleasure – is, given the content and tone of some of his poems and the novel, *Ma lat 22*, obvious. He was a man the modern feminist critics would love to hate. On the other hand, several poems of his belong to the most beautiful examples of a highly charged, beautiful, sensitive, wise and 'thrilling' erotic poetry.[143]

[II.16] The writer's *œuvre* (and especially what he wrote and published prior to 1939) does not constitute a massive body of work, yet it is sizeable enough to disavow once and for all any accusations of his supposed "laziness."[144] The edition of his works, spanning over three decades of Stanisław Jaworski's impeccable editorial effort (Tadeusz Peiper. *Pisma* [Writings], Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1972-2004), comprises seven volumes:

- Volume One containing his two major theoretical writings, *i.e. Nowe usta*

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[142] Jan Brzękowski, "Garść wspomnień o Peiperze," op. cit., 7.

[143] Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz, *W kręgu „Zwrotnicy,"* op. cit., 64. Wiesław Paweł Szymański, *Neosymbolizm. O awangardowej poezji polskiej w latach trzydziestych* [Neosymbolism. Studies on Avant-garde Polish Poetry in the 1930s] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1973) 81-82.

[144] Zygmunt Leśnodorski argues that the real value of Peiper's output is reversely proportional to the slim size of it. Ibidem, 319. See also Chapter III.

[The New Lips] (1925) and *Tędy* [This Way] (1930);[145]

- Volume Two featuring his collected critical articles, essays as well as interviews he had given between 1918 and 1939, *i.e. O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś* [Of Everything And More];[146]
- Volume Three presenting his two novels, *i.e. Ma lat 22* [He Is Twenty Two] (1936) and *Krzysztof Kolumb odkrywca* [Christopher Columbus, Discoverer] (1949);[147]
- Volume Four incorporating his collected poetic writings consisting of four slim books of poetry,[148] *i.e. A* (1924), *Żywe linie* [Living Lines, 1924], *Raz* [Once, 1928], *Na przykład* [For Example, 1931][149] and his stage works, *i.e.* three plays: two original works, *Szósta! Szósta!* [It's Six! It's Six!, 1925] and *Skoro go nie ma* [Since He's Not Here, 1933], and a relatively late translation of Lope de Vega's *Pies ogrodnika* [The Gardener's Dog, 1956; original title *El perro del hortelano*; Peiper's last creative effort to have been published dur-

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[145] Published in 1972. Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *Tędy. Nowe usta* [This Way. The New Lips] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1972).

[146] Published in 1974. Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś* [Of Everything and More] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1974). This volume includes a number of texts hitherto unavailable in print.

[147] Published in 1977. Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *Ma lat 22. Krzysztof Kolum odkrywca* [e Is Twenty-Two. Christopher Columbus, Discoverer] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1977).

[148] Published in 1979. Tadeusz Peiper (Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz, Stanisław Jaworski, Eds.), *Poematy i utwory teatralne* [Poems and Stage Works] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979). The 1935 edition of *Poematy/Poems* only included slightly revised versions of earlier poetic works.

[149] This volume also includes miscellaneous poetic fragments and numerous translations, mainly from Spanish and French, dispersed until then (1979) in literary and artistic magazines, or existing in manuscripts only.

ing his lifetime[150]];[151]

- Volumes Five and Six, *Wśród ludzi na scenach i na ekranie* [Among People on Stage and Screen], Vols. I & II, offering his reviews of and essays on theatre and film, written and (few of them) published after 1942;[152]
- Volume Seven, *Gabriela Zapolska jako aktorka* [Gabriela Zapolska as Actress], written in the late 1950s (the last significant work which he finished) and being an extensive study on the legendary playwright and actress and her performing techniques.[153]

[II.17] Peiper's activity ended roughly at the outbreak of World War II. In September 1939 Peiper, a member of an old assimilated Polish-Jewish family, Leftist and patriot who had good reasons to fear Nazi persecution,[154] escaped to the Soviet Union where, as a result of a provocation, he spent some time in an NKVD (from which the later KGB evolved) prison, brutally interrogated and deprived of his writings, this time confiscated by the Soviet authorities. Arrested in January 1940 (along with Władysław Broniewski, Anatol Stern and

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[150] Bogdana Carpenter is obviously only partially correct when she states that after the Second World War Peiper was only active as a theatre critic (*cf.* Bogdana Carpenter, *The Poetic Avant-garde in Poland 1918-1939*, op. cit., 96.

[151] Published in 1979. Tadeusz Peiper. *Poematy i utwory teatralne* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1979).

[152] Published in 2000. Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *Wśród ludzi na scenach i na ekranie* [Among People on Stage and Screen], Vols. I & II (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2000).

[153] Published in 2004. Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *Gabriela Zapolska jako aktorka* [Gabriela Zapolska as Actress] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2004).

[154] Shortly before the war, Peiper published an article, "Odgłosy sprawy Górnego Śląska" [The Resonance of the Affairs in Upper Silesia] in: *Zaranie Śląskie* [The Silesia Dawning], 1938, No. 1, in which he criticised the attitudes of the German leaders towards the region.

Aleksander Wat, all of them radical Leftist poets already before the war), Peiper was later let free because... he happened to know Mayakovski personally![155] He was indeed very fortunate to have survived.[156] It was during this time of personal trial that he contracted persecution mania. Much has been made by Polish literary historians of Peiper's (mild) mental condition, but practically none of them has ever found it necessary to show the immediate connection between the torture to which Peiper was subjected in the Soviet Union and his gradual withdrawal from public life after the Second World War. According to members of his family, this withdrawal resulted as much from the illness as from his growing dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in Communist-controlled Poland. Well-known, for example, are his violent verbal polemics with the literary members of the Polish Communist élite, including the revolutionary lyricist, Władysław Broniewski (1897 – 1962). After the war, Peiper, dispossessed of his property by the new administration, settled in Warsaw. He grew increasingly uncomfortable with the aesthetic directives of the new regime and, apart from a 1949 novel *Krzysztof Kolumb odkrywca*, and a 1956 translation of a Lope de Vega play, *Pies ogrodnika*, he did not publish anything significant. Moreover, he categorically forbade publishing even those

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[155] Stanisław Jaworski, "Nota biograficzna" [Biographical Note] in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 422.

[156] A number of ideologically radical Polish writers who emigrated to the Soviet Union even before the war, perished during the 1930s Stalinist purges. Especially telling is the fate of the three well-known former Futurists and Communist writers, Jasieński, Wandurski and Stande who, like their Ukrainian counterparts Semenko, Shkurupii, Slisarenko and Shpol (all of whom died in 1937), were murdered there. See Oleh Ilnytzkyj. *Ukrainian Futurism, 1914-1930. A Historical and Critical Study* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1997).

works which had appeared in print before the war. Yet he kept writing until the very end. Tadeusz Peiper died in Warsaw on 10 November 1969, the direct cause of his death being pneumonia.

III. *That Hymn of Silk* – Towards the New Poetic Diction

> *Today, when I am sending my poetry on its last journey, I cannot refrain also from performing the last rites for it. If I say that I am following the hearse sadly, I understate.*
>
> Tadeusz Peiper[1]

[III.1] A quote will open the discussion: 'Tadeusz Peiper's extreme intellectualism changes his poems into constructs, which require preparation and a key to decipher these cryptograms. If poetry depended on intellectual satisfaction arising from solving such tasks, his work would make sense... Having set himself against imitators, Tadeusz Peiper, the founder and publisher of *Zwrotnica*, propagated creative and individual exploration of the ideas first found among the futurists and formists.'[2] The quote is from the 1930 comprehensive study, *Współczesna literature polska* [Contemporary Polish Literature], authored much earlier by Wilhelm Feldman (1868 – 1919) and brought up to date in its eighth edition by Stefan Kołaczkowski (1887 – 1940). Apart from incorrectly assigning Peiper to two different camps the poet had very little to do with (both of which had little to do with one another), Kołaczkowski makes a statement which is strangely relevant to any discussion on Peiper's poetry, the am-

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[1] "Przedmowa" [Foreword] to *Poematy* [Poems], 1935. Quoted after *Poematy i utwory teatralne* [Poems and Theatrical Works] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979), op. cit., 25. [All translations by P. G-M unless indicated otherwise.]

[2] Wilhelm Feldman (and Stefan Kołaczkowski), *Współczesna literatura polska* [Contemporary Polish Literature] (Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1930) 664-665. 'Skrajny intelektualizm Tadeusza Peipera przemienia jego poezje w konstrukcje, wymagające przygotowania i klucza do odczytania tego szyfrowanego pisma. Gdyby poezja polegała na intelektualnym zadowoleniu z rozwiązywania postawionych zadań, byłaby ta działalność celową... Tadeusz Peiper, założyciel i wydawca "Zwrotnicy", przeciwstawiając się naśladownictwu, propagował twórcze i własne wydobywanie wartości z fururyzmu i formizmu...'

biguity here being the accusation of excessive intellectualism on one hand (as if only those who are not intellectuals were able to write well, or, rather, as if only simplest poetic forms, free from complexity, were of any value) and appreciation of the poet's individualism on another. Such a dichotomous view of his *œuvre* would affect a great number of interpretative studies on Peiper and the avant-garde right from the beginning of his creative and theoretical work. The "cryptographic" simile turned out to be quite attractive and popular: 'The very first impression after having read these verses is that here we deal with riddles, and the author is a riddler... It looks as if he was telling us: "Guess what I wanted to say, and you shall learn interesting things." The crux of the matter is that after having guessed, the reader does not learn anything interesting. The whole challenging depth is here created by employing complex metaphors to describe visible objects. The author carefully avoids calling things by their proper names, he only goes round and round them. This has got to be his "pseudonyming" [technique]. Peiper's elevation of metaphor reminds one of the period of linguistic purism in France, when words such as *teeth* were avoided as vulgar and replaced by, say, "furniture of the oral cavity."'[3] This is

[3] Władysław Sebyła, "Poezje" in: *Pion*, No. 3 (Warszawa: 1936) 6. *Pion* appeared between 1933 and 1939. 'Pierwsze wrażenie po przeczytaniu tych wierszy – to, że mamy do czynienia z szaradami, a autor jest szaradzistą... Wygląda to jakby mówił: "Zgadnij, co ja chciałem powiedzieć, a dowiesz się ciekawych rzeczy". Cała rzecz w tym, że czytelnik po odgadnięciu nie dowiaduje się niczego ciekawego. Cała problematyczna głębia polega na opisywaniu widzianych przedmiotów w zawiłych przenośniach. Autor starannie unika nazywania rzeczy po imieniu, krąży tylko koło niej. To ma być "pseudonimowanie". Ta wzniosłość metaforyczna Peipera przypomina okres puryzmu językowego we Francji, kiedy unikano takich powiedzeń jak *zęby* itd., jako wulgarnych, a zastpowano je np.: "umeblowanie jamy ustnej".' It seems Sebyła did not make, or did not want to make, a distinction between metaphor and metonymy.

from the 1936 review by Władysław Sebyła (1902-1940, captured by the Soviets in 1939 and then killed by the secret police NKVD, most likely during the horrid Katyń massacre), which appeared in the pro-government weekly, *Pion* [The Plumb] some time after the first edition of Tadeusz Peiper's collected poems, the *Poematy*, was issued in 1935.

On another occasion, this time in *Rocznik Literacki* [The Literary Yearbook], Sebyła, himself a poet of note,[4] chastised Peiper as follows: 'True poetry, like each true beauty, has that which arrests our attention, something which coerces us into contemplation, even if we do not entirely comprehend it, or if we do not entirely grasp the poet's creative intention. Peiper's "poetry" excites other emotions: it either makes us impatient or wanting to try to translate it into some intelligible language... [T]he difficulty of solving the Peiper metaphors does not repay the effort, nor does it encourage any further contemplation; it only results in our shaking heads at the strange, crooked world the author conveys to us...'[5]

Before that, in 1933, the well-known poet, critic and Christian philosopher,

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[4] In 1938, awarded the Golden Academic Laurel by the Polish Academy of Literature.

[5] Idem, "Sprawozdanie za rok 1935 w dziedzinie liryki" [The Report for 1935 in Poetry] in: *Rocznik Literacki* [The Literary Yearbook], No. 3 (Warszawa: Instytut Literacki, 1935) 44. *Rocznik Literacki* was published between 1933 (covering literary production of 1932) and 1939 (covering 1938). See: Jerzy Kądziela, Jerzy Kwiatkowski, Irena Wyczańska (Eds.), *Literatura polska w okresie międzywojennym* [Polish Literature in the Interwar Period], Vol. I (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979) 334-337 (*Pion*) and 432-436 (*Rocznik Literacki*). 'Prawdziwa poezja, jak każde piękno ma w sobie coś zastanawiającego, zmuszającego do kontemplacji, nawet jeśli się jej na razie nie rozumie, czy nie ogarnia całkowicie zamysłu twórczego poety. "Poezja" Peipera budzi uczucia zupełnie inne: albo zniecierpliwienie, albo próby przetłumaczenia na jakiś zrozumiały język... [T]rud rozwikłania przenośni peiperowskich nie opłaca się, nie skłania ku dalszej kontemplacji, lecz doprowadza do pokiwania głową nad przedziwną koślawością przedstawien ukazywanego nam przez autora świata.'

Bolesław Miciński (1911-1943), published a nasty (there is no other word for it) review of the *Antologia poezji społecznej* [The Anthology of Social Poetry], which he tellingly entitled *Peiperyzacja czy pauperyzacja intelektualna?* [Intellectual Peiperisation or Pauperisation?].[6] Miciński stated bluntly that many of the poets included in the anthology 'had as much to do with æsthetics as "peiperism" did with poetry.' Was Miciński biased? After all, he, a Catholic who at some point collaborated with the radical right-wing weekly, *Prosto z Mostu*,[7] might have been prejudiced towards the leftist, sometimes even revolutionary, poets who rejected the Christ for the sake of Marx – and if not Marx, then at least for the sake of a socialist, or social-democratic, "red" ideology. Plausibly, Miciński could have held a grudge against the proverbial "unsavoury bunch" of poets to whom the Piłsudski Poland did not appear as social paradise. As Janusz Kryszak asserts, Miciński was not alone in questioning Peiper's æsthetic stance – as well as his view of the world, *i.e.* his ideological principles, which seemingly absorbed the young poets included in the aforementioned anthology. Even if their poetry did not comply with Peiper's æsthetics (and in most cases it did not), to Miciński, a conservative through and through (and not only to him), "peiperism" denoted a "model" danger zone (or one of many

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[6] Bolesław Miciński (Anna Micińska, Ed.), *Pisma: Eseje, artykuły, listy* [Writings: Essays, Articles, Letters] (Kraków: Znak, 1970) 280-284.

[7] The literal English translation: "straight from the bridge" does not make any sense. The title translates best as "straight from the shoulder," which the Polish "prosto z mostu" actually means. The weekly appeared between 1935 and 1939, progressively drifting to the extreme, nationalistic and totalitarian, right. It was indeed ironic that one of its main contributors, Jan Mosdorf (1904-1943), died in a concentration camp (Auschwitz), a hero of the anti-Nazi Polish resistance. Jerzy Kądziela, Jerzy Kwiatkowski, Irena Wyczańska (Eds.), op. cit., 343-346.

such zones), where the proven and well established fashions of reasoning and behaviour were disappearing, confronted by new ethics, as signified in the new poetry.[8] However, Miciński was not biased in the sense of what had been—and will have been—said about Peiper. Apart from the ethical aspect of Peiper's work, in general his poetry was often seen as an illustration of his theoretical paradigm. As Kryszak demonstrated, one could compile an impressive list of simplistic invectives addressing Peiper and his poetic craft, but it must be remembered that their offensive, contemptuous tone would not be the harshest in Peiper's eyes. What he loathed most was accusations of his poetry's being derived from what he wrote as a literary critic, of its being "nothing but." Peiper explains at length:

> I published my first poems in *Zwrotnica* – under a pseudonym. Afterwards, when my pseudonym was deciphered, people began sniffing around to find out why I used it.
>
> One of the reasons was simple: because I was both the editor and publisher of *Zwrotnica* and because I carved its profile through substantial articles on art, I elected to use a *nom de plume* in order to avoid being overrepresented and ever-present.
>
> The second reason... I have never said anything about it to any one... The second reason... Some strange kind of modesty.[9] Some strange kind of modesty was stopping me from publishing these poems under my real name, because whatever poetry may be, it always reveals its author's most personal experiences. In the course of time, I then became skilled at impudence, without which a poet cannot live, but in the beginning it was all different ...
>
> Under these circumstances my enemies profited, as did my friends, the latter strikingly resembling the former. They tried to make others believe that since I did not sign my poetry with my name, I considered it less important than my articles, or unimportant at all. There were those who, puzzled by my use of a pen name, tried to explain that it

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[8] Janusz Kryszak, "Poeta 'urojonej perspektywy' – Tadeusz Peiper" [The Poet of Delusionary Perspectives] in: Irena Maciejewska (Ed.), *Poeci dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*, op. cit., 59-61.

[9] Here Peiper uses the very rare word 'pudor,' which comes from French: *pudeur* = modesty.

was my mystification to demonstrate that in the unknown author, Jan Alden, the editor found a supporter and practitioner of his views. Then, when they learned who that Jan Alden was, they thought they solved the puzzle: "Peiper writes poetry to illustrate his theories." [...]

I cannot ignore this interpretation of my poetic work, if only because it has continued until the present day, also in relation to the whole group of poets who have followed me. But no, dear sirs, no! My poetry was not born to illustrate my "theory." I did not offer my first substantial text on poetry (*Nowe usta*) until after my first two volumes were published. Also, those two volumes had been preceded by many, many years of poetic work. People who talk about my inclinations to "illustrate" my literary criticism by means of poetry do not know what life is, and what poetry is when it becomes life. To reach into one's own tender depths; to examine the darkest layers within oneself; to discover the currents nobody had yet seen; to say things nobody had yet said; to undertake the work against which internal resistance rages – and to do it all not for the sake of the cause alone? Without belief in the magnitude of that cause? Hey, people, are you horrible in your interpretations of man!

On the contrary! My articles on poetry but served my poetry. They were neither a "theory," nor a "doctrine," nor a "recipe." They were meditations and exhortations of a person who felt he set his foot on an important path. It is obvious that these meditations and exhortations stroke more than one spark of poetry. Naïve are those who imagine that a poet works the same way as eyes produce tears, that is without any co-participation of intellect and will. Yes, there are humbugs who uphold such fancies, but one does not have to take them into account. Meditating on poetry and then shaping up the results of such meditations into ideas – this is an integral part of poet's life. If life were given to a writer in order for him to write about it, then meditations on literature are also life...

Understand, please: my poetry was first![10]

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[10] Tadeusz Peiper, "Przedmowa" [Foreword] to *Poematy*, op. cit., 25-27. 'Drukowałem pierwsze moje utwory w „Zwrotnicy" – pod pseudonimem. Gdy potem mój pseudonim zdemaskowano, zaczęto dowąchiwać się przyczyn, dla których go użyłem.

Jedna z przyczyn była prosta: ponieważ sam byłem redaktorem i wydawcą „Zwrotnicy" i postać jej obrysowywałem obszernymi artykułami o sztuce, więc, aby redagowanego i wydawanego przeze mnie pisma nie przeładowywać swoim nazwiskiem, kładłem pod utworami poetyckimi pseudonim. Druga przyczyna... Nigdy o niej nie mówiłem nikomu... Druga przyczyna... Jakiś pudor. Jakiś pudor wstrzymywał mnie od ogłaszania poezji pod prawdziwym nazwiskiem, bo czymkolwiek byłaby poezja, zawsze jest ujawnianiem najbardziej osobistych przeżyć autora. Bieg rzeczy uczył mnie potem stopniowo bezwstydu, bez którego nie ma życia poety, ale początkowo...

Korzystali z tych okoliczności wrogowie i łudząco do nich podobni przyjaciele. Wmawiali w siebie i w innych, że, skoro mojej poezji nie podpisuję prawdziwym nazwiskiem, to znaczy iż mam ją za mniej ważną od moich artykułów lub w ogóle za nieważną. Byli tacy, którzy zagadkowe dla nich pseudonimowanie usiłowali tłomaczyć mistyfikacją redaktora, pragnącego wywołać wrażenie że w nieznanym autorze, Janie Aldenie, ma już zwolennika i realizatora

[III.2] This was to no avail, as most critics paid no heed. Says Czesław Miłosz: 'The editor of *The Switch* [Zwrotnica], Tadeusz Peiper, influenced many of the young more by his uncompromising articles than by his poetry, which is interesting only as an example of unflinching attachment to principles."[11] Bogdana Carpenter is of the same opinion: 'Although Peiper wrote voluminously on theory, he wrote surprisingly little poetry.' Despite this disparity in volume, there is a very close correlation between Peiper's æsthetic theory and his poetic practice—indeed, the convergence between the two is so complete that it gives rise to the suspicion that either the theory was created to provide commentary on the poetry, or the poetic practice was an illustration of the theory. Regardless of which point of view is correct, the interdependence of the two had im-

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swoich poglądów. Potem, gdy już dowiedziano się kim jest Jan Alden, osądzono, że zagadkę rozwiązano: „Peiper pisze poezje, aby ilustrować swe teorie". [...]

Interpretacji ilustratorskiej pominąć nie mogę, już choćby z tego powodu, że utrzymuje się ona do dnia dzisiejszego, i to w zastosowaniu do całej grupy poetów która wyszła ze mnie. Otóż nie, panowie, nie. Moja poezja nie rodziła się dla ilustrowania mojej „teorii". Pierwszą moją wypowiedź o poezji („Nowe usta") dałem po opublikowaniu dwóch tomików, a przecie przed tymi tomikami miałem za sobą wiele wiele lat poezjowania. Ci którzy mówią o owym ilustratorstwie, nie wiedzą co to jest życie ludzkie i co to jest poezja gdy jest życiem człowieka. Sięgać w swe tkliwe głębie, wydobywać ze siebie najbardziej mroczne warstwy, odkrywać nurty których nikt dotąd nie nie widział, mówić rzeczy których nikt jeszcze nie powiedział, podejmować pracę przeciwko której srożą się męczące opory wewnętrzne, i czynić to wszystko nie dla samej ważności sprawy? nie z wiary w jej ogromność? Ej, ludzie, potworni jesteście w waszych interpretacjach człowieka.

Było wręcz przeciwnie! Moje artykuły o poezji służyły mojej poezji. Nie były ani „teorią" ani „doktryną" ani „receptą". Były rozmyślaniami i nawoływaniami człowieka, który czuł że stoi na ważnej drodze. Oczywista że z tych rozmyślań i nawoływań wykrzeszała się dla mnie niejedna iskra poezji. Są naiwni, którzy wyobrażają sobie że poeta tworzy w taki sposób w jaki oczy wydzielają łzy, tj. Bez udziału myśli i woli, i są blagierzy którzy te wyobrażenia podtrzymują, ale wolno nie brać tego w rachubę. Rozmyślania o poezji i ustalanie ich wyników w ideach o poezji to składowa część życia poety. Jeśli życie pisarza istnieje dla pisarza po to aby mógł o nim pisać, to rozmyślania o literaturze są też takim życiem. [...]

Zrozumiejcież: pierwszym była moja poezja!'

[11] Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, op. cit., 402.

portant consequences for the evolution of Peiper's poetry, and was probably responsible for the deadlock that arose in 1929."[12]

Presented by the modern Polish literary critic (albeit based in the United States), this point of view is fascinating in that it illustrates well a propensity—obviously hard to resist even today—to perceive theory and practice as two different, rather incompatible, aspects of the literary *genus*. Its predicament might be expressed thusly: poets who a l s o "flirt" with theory expose themselves to critical scrutiny, in the process of which either their respective creative imaginations, or their respective investigative methodologies, suffer questioning. Linguistic entities are here perceived as devoid of their dialectical ability to 'coming into discourse."[13] Such a position—a position negative in the tenor of its assertions, and, one way or another, relegating the creative theoretical act into the background—is very likely of Romantic provenance, the already quoted Mickiewicz well-known couplet from the ballade *Romantyczność* [The Romantic, 1822] being no more than a p o e t i c précis of this argument: 'Faith and love are more discerning / Than a wise man's lenses or learning."[14] Bogdana Carpenter concludes: 'With Peiper the theory of construction had been pushed to and beyond its limits. By stressing the antirealism of the poem's frame of reference, by affirming it need have no basis or analogy in the

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[12] Bogdana Carpenter, *The Poetic Avant-garde in Poland 1918-1939* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1983) 94. [In 1929 the much discussed collection of Peiper's poems, *Raz* [Once], was published.]

[13] Paul De Man, *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 19.

[14] In Polish: 'Czucie i wiara silniej mówi do mnie / Niż mędrca szkiełoko i oko.' Translation based on Miłosz, op. cit., 213.

recognizable world, and by pushing it beyond the boundaries of human psychology, he cut the theory off at its roots. He was an extremist, perhaps a fanatic, but it was his own poetry that suffered most of all. The theories remained, coherent, full of interest, Peiper's main achievement. Others were able to make fruitful use of them, and the best poetry was written by other members of the group [the Kraków Avant-garde]."[15]

But those "other members of the group," Jan Brzękowski, Jalu Kurek and Julian Przyboś, also lived "double lives" similar to Peiper's. It is true that his concepts initially attracted them much—to the extent of their being labelled his "school;" in the end they came down history as the "Kraków Avant-garde," understood as an alliance of four experimenters who followed (at least in the beginning) similar creative principles—and that his *Zwrotnica* had quickly become their learning ground. Yet what's more, it is true that both Brzękowski and Przyboś, not to mention Adam Ważyk (although the latter must not be identified with the Kraków Avant-garde group as its founding member and full-fledged participant; his connection to the other four was of a much more complex—much more loose!—nature),[16] were later particularly keen on developing their **own** theories and conducted rigorous theoretical and critical work throughout their careers, at some point inevitably in opposition to Peiper. Somehow, all that critical and theoretical effort on *their* part did not affect the

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[15] Carpenter, op. cit., 110.

[16] Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz, *W kręgu „Zwrotnicy". Studia i szkice z dziejów krakowskiej Awangardy* [The "Zwrotnica" Circle. Studies and Sketches on the History of the Kraków Avant-garde] (Kraków – Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1983) 262-293.

quality of *their* artistic endeavour as it supposedly did Peiper's? This would be, it appears, a rather distorted interpretation. Most probably, it all comes down to the manifestly stereotyped—or perhaps credulous—reading, perception and evaluation of the individual, separate chapters in the *œuvre* of the Kraków Avant-garde, where Peiper's poetry is frequently deemed to replicate his theory to the point of enslavement, which apparently deprived it of its grammatical, rhetorical, and logical relevance to the receivers ("average" readers) who find themselves trapped in the interpretative fear. Such a standpoint may well be understood as being itself a consequence of anxious prejudices – the poet becomes a victim of reductionist applications which misplace his æsthetic in comparatively alien territories: 'Peiper's approach towards the poetic language: artless, constructivist, excessively chiselled and confectionary, turned out to be anachronistic in relation to its contents, which poetry did not want to, and could not, avoid. Would it ever be possible for [Tadeusz] Różewicz to employ Peiper's idiom to say: "Led to slaughter / I survived"?'[17] The excerpt implies that Tadeusz Różewicz's ascetic, sometimes minimalistic narrative style is in its expressive articulations superior to Peiper's imagined verbosity, or, as Karol Irzykowski would have said, "verbosis". But it was, it appears, a curious choice of analytical methodology which led to such dramatic declarations, and a

[17] Bogdan Czaykowski, „Poetyka Peipera – uwagi krytyczne" [Peiper's Poetics – Critical Remarks] in: *Oficyna Poetów*, (London, UK) 1968, No. 4 (11) 12. 'Rzemieślniczy, konstruktywistyczny, w practice jubilersko-cukierniczy stosunek Peipera do języka poetyckiego okazał się anachronizmem wobec treści, których poezja nie chciała i nie potrafiła uniknąć. Jakżesz bo miał Różewicz powiedzieć językiem Peipera: „Ocalałem prowadzony na rzeź". The quoted Różewicz line is from the poem *Ocalony* [The Survivor].

sweeping and dangerous generalisation, which ignored:

1) the psycho-temporal gulf between two distinct personal and professional experiences, their different, to refer to Umberto Eco, existential credentials, their sense of individual conditioning, cultural values, tastes, personal inclinations and prejudices; in a sense, the author of the above statement compared apples to oranges: one could certainly accuse, say, Mallarmé's poetry of not being on par with Różewicz's because of the former's lexical opulence;

2) the multifarious nature of Peiper's poetry, in which along the exceptionally refined (aestheticising), formally elaborate and metaphor-laden poems there exist others, which impress with their compressed, lean syntax, often employed to excellent effect in conveying, among others, impatient brutality of greed or sexual desire – so often found in Różewicz;

3) Peiper's power of imagination which, combined with his craftsmanship (at its best – virtuosity), allowed him to produce a great deal of excellent verse, including *Na plaży* [On The Beach], to which the legendary Polish literary theoretician, Janusz Sławiński, refers as 'likely the most interesting achievement of Peiper's, and generally one of the best erotic poems in avant-garde lyric poetry."[18]

4) the very simple fact that, quite possibly, there would not be Różewicz with-

[18] Janusz Sławiński, "Poetyka i poezja Tadeusza Peipera" [Tadeusz Peiper's Poetry and Poetics] in: *Twórczość*, Year XIV, June 1958, No. 6, 76-77. Bogdan Czaykowski's refernce to Peiper's poetry as 'artless, constructivist, excessively chiselled and confectionary' is taken almost *verbatim* from the Sławiński article, where it appears with much less accusatory—more descriptive than accusatory—intent on page 73.

out Peiper, without Peiper's late poetry which so radically did away with lexical complexity for the sake of quasi-documentary, matter-of-factly precision, clarity and gallows humour for which Różewicz is widely appreciated;[19] it does not really matter that Różewicz's lines are shorter;

5) the pronounced, albeit sometimes indirect, influence Peiper's poetics came to exercise both on his contemporaries before and then on several generations of poets after the Second World War, on the one hand including the "pimply ones" (an allusion to their young age marked by acne), whose poetry published between 1948 and 1951 had anticipated the inescapable arrival of socialist realism,[20] and on the other hand the socially conscientious representatives of the "New Wave," who had begun publishing in the mid-1960s.[21]

[III.3] The abovementioned interpretative fears resonate loudly in that space of Karol Irzykowski's critical reflection, which he allotted to a polemic with Peiper. Along with Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński (1874 – 1941, executed in Lwów/Lviv by the Nazis), to whom he devoted a libellous critical work, *Beniaminek* [One Spoiled Brat, 1933] and Adolf Nowaczyński (1876 – 1944), Karol Irzykowski (1873

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[19] Wiesław Paweł Szymański, *Neosymbolizm. O awangardowej poezji polskiej w latach trzydziestych* [Neosymbolism. Studies on Avant-garde Polish Poetry in the 1930s] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1973) 100-102. The refreshingly unorthodox and highly inspiring readings of Peiper's theoretical and poetic *œuvre* are among many strengths of this excellent book. However, Szymański is cautious and warns against drawing too far-reached analogies between Peiper and Różewicz, demonstrating certain similarities – as well as major differences between the two.

[20] Sławiński, op. cit., 71.

[21] Paweł Majerski (Ed.), *Układy sprawdzeń (w kręgu Nowej Fali)* [Test Sets (All Round the New Wave)] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 1997); Bożena Tokarz, *Poetyka Nowej Fali* [The Poetics of the New Wave] (Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski, 1990).

– 1944, another victim of the war) was arguably the leading and most respected—and, as the other two, frequently reviled—literary critic of the interwar period. A significant, if falling short of being considered magnificent, triumvirate of three complementary rhetorics: the progressive (to some: radical) rhetoric of the scandalising Boy-Żeleński, the archconservative rhetoric of the offensive and at times virulently anti-Semitic Nowaczyński, and with them – the consciously and persistently independent[22] (but not impartial) rhetoric of the energetic and philosophically inclined Irzykowski.

Already beginning in 1908, Irzykowski, later one of Peiper's main critics and polemicists, had in the course of thirty years written a number of texts, chiefly analyses and polemics, in which he fought against what he considered unnecessary poetic obscurity. Two of them are of particular interest, for they focus on Peiper's avant-garde æsthetics and subject it to punctilious examination: *Metaphoritis i złota plomba* [Metaphoritis and the Gold Filling], an extensive postscript to an earlier essay, *Zdobnictwo a poezji. Rzecz o metaforze* [Ornamentation in Poetry. Reflections on Metaphor], both published in Part III of his *Walka o treść* [The Struggle for Content, 1929],[23] and *Burmistrz marzeń*

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[22] 'He published... in various periodicals, which sometimes differed in their political orientations as well as in their literary qualities. This he did deliberatelyin order to—as he used to say— "reduce to absurdity when in truth it is all about things literary..."' Wojciech Głowala, "Wstęp" [Introduction] in: Karol Irzykowski (W. Głowala, Ed.), *Wybór pism krytyczno-literackich* [Selected Critical Writings] (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdańsk: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1975) IV.

[23] Karol Irzykowski (Andrzej Lam, Ed.), *Walka o treść. Studia z literackiej teorii poznania / Beniaminek. Rzecz o Boyu-Żeleńskim* [The Struggle for Contents. Studies on the Literary Theory of Cognition / One Spoiled Brat. On Boy-Żeleński] (Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1976).

niezamieszkanych [The Burgomaster of Vacant Dreams, 1931/34] – likely two most important (or at least best known) critical studies on Peiper's work until well after the Second World War.[24]

In the first essay, Irzykowski examines Peiper's technique, calling him the 'true experimenter and martyr of the metaphor.'[25] Peiper, Irzykowski maintains, takes on hard, ambitious and risky tasks, but errs and the final results are questionable. 'In his [Peiper's] *Żywe linie* [Living Lines][26] a woman's calf is called "that hymn of silk above sweet cruelty."[27] It is the evidence of the poet's stay in Spain, where the *piropos* originated.[28] The poem *Pod dachem ze smutku* [Under the Roof of Sadness] begins with: "Hungry, the sky sat down on the ground – a mouse resting on a sigh." We speak of a mouse in a box, so why not a mouse on a sigh – it is probably intended to denote an incredibly delicate and trembling touch. This I can still endure, but it gets more difficult when the

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[24] First published in *Wiadomości Literackie* [The Literary News], No. 1, 1931. Then included in the 1934 book of essays, *Słoń wśród porcelany (Studia nad nowszą myślą literacką w Polsce)*. Karol Irzykowski (Zofia Górzyna, Ed.), *Słoń wśród porcelany (Studia nad nowszą myślą literacką w Polsce) / Lżejszy kaliber* [An Elephant in a China Shop (Studies on the More Recent Literary Ideas in Poland) / Lighter Calibre] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1976).

[25] Karol Irzykowski, *Wybór pism krytycznoliterackich*, op. cit., 262.

[26] Tadeusz Peiper, *Żywe linie. Poezje* [Living Lines. Poems]. With drawings by Juan Gris. (Kraków: Zwrotnica, 1924).

[27] Excerpted from one of Peiper's most famous poems, *Noga* [Leg] in: Tadeusz Peiper (Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz, Stanisław Jaworski, Eds.), *Poematy i utwory teatralne* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979) 71.

[28] *Piròpos* (singular: *piropo*) are very short, single-line poetic addresses to women, whose purpose is to facilitate flirtation. According to Peiper („Z kraju słonej Wenery" [From the Land of the Salty Venus], *Kurier Poranny* [The Morning Courier], No. 244, Kraków 1929) they were sold in the form of small printed leaflets to men who were not able to come up with their own well composed compliments. Stanisław Jaworski rightly observes that Irzykowski's remark is typical for those critics who tried at any cost to find outside influences in Peiper's poetry w i t h i n his texts, instead of looking for such influences, if any, elsewhere, at their presumed sources. Tadeusz Peiper, *Poematy...*, op. cit., 663.

poet, dreaming of the repose which awaits him, says: "The evening... will throw my tongue to the bottom of my lower jaw and knock off my head, which pulsating, hissing and swearing is already slipping down on my boots."[29] [...] "Naked breast" (of a woman who appeared at night in an illuminated window) [Irzykowski's explanation] "fluttered in my pocket like a banknote" – it means that the poet confined this image of the naked breast in his memories, that he stole it – as he later admits. "I look, shivering I put out [the] eyes" (his own, of course) [Irzykowski's malicious comment, one of the trademarks of his often ironically stinging, critical style] "and on knives' blades I sent them for the naked breast."[30] Where are those knives from? Are they the same which he used to put out his eyes? These are already personal associations, to the understanding of which we have no key; it is a silence of gold caused by the gold filling (100%).[31] What strikes in Peiper is metaphors running wild. One is not enough for him, from that one he derives another, and from that second one, the third – these are metaphors squared, cubed etc... Indeed, it is a self-contained, autogenous literary reality, exceeding to a colossal degree the content's actual

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[29] The quote again taken from *Pod dachem ze smutku* [Under the Roof of Sadness] from *Żywe linie* in: Tadeusz Peiper (Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz, Stanisław Jaworski, Eds.), *Poematy i utwory teatralne*, op. cit., 69.

[30] Selected from the poem *Chwila ze złota* [A Golden Instant] from the volume *Raz. Poezje* [Once. Poems] (Warszawa: Księgarnia F. Hoesicka, 1929); Tadeusz Peiper (Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz, Stanisław Jaworski, Eds.), *Poematy i utwory teatralne*, op. cit., 86-87.

[31] Irzykowski's metonymy, the "gold filling" standing for metaphorical excess of avant-garde ("futurist") poetry, which suffered from what he calls *metaphoritis*, a sickness unto metaphors, and whose meaning is kept hidden the same way one who has gold fillings tries not to open her or his mouth too wide. In the same paragraph Irzykowski (again!) talks about avant-garde poetry offering "riddles" to its unfortunate potential receivers. Karol Irzykowski, *Wybór pism krytycznoliterackich*, op. cit., 258-259.

need. Ancient poetics called such accumulation and coupling of metaphors c a t a c h r e s i s [κατάχρησις] and allowed the use of this device to express great affectation, in which one seeks to enunciate one's feelings – and goes astray. In Peiper's verse... I call it metaphoric tautology...'[32]

In the second essay in question, the more important of the two, *Burmistrz marzeń niezamieszkanych* [The Burgomaster of Vacant Dreams], Irzykowski goes even farther in poring over Peiper's æsthetics and praxis. Time and again he does it jokingly, ever with his typical good-natured malice (which is not absent from Peiper's own writings...). Irzykowski rightly observes that what Peiper postulated in relation to the rôle of present day topics as sources of inspiration in contemporary poetry, and to the resultant function of metaphors within poems—these metaphors best suited to building new æsthetic realities which in turn project unto physical reality, the technology-driven world—was often overstated by the poet in order to defend his arguments against other "trendy" concepts: 'it was necessary for him to exaggerate his postulates against the opposing fashion.' This, presumably, made Peiper's poetry so outlandish and hardly adequate to the original aim for the "new beauty." What's more, Irzykowski takes this opportunity to target Peiper's poetry by way of delivering a broadside against his 'Socialist confession of faith:' '[Peiper] is also a socialist *à la* lord Wilde. Characteristic in this regard is his heartfelt poem *Wyjazd niedzielny* [Sunday Outing] from the volume *Raz* [Once]. The poet went out on

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[32] Ibidem, 262-264.

an excursion and is having a veal cutlet (with red beets and compote) in a suburban restaurant. However, suddenly the jobless come to his mind as well as a pertinent slogan: "cutlets for all mouths!" – and he is tempted to grab the cutlet by the bone like a "red flag" attached to a "flagpole not from a ballad" and

Raise it up! inspire shivers in nocturnal distances!
drive it into the hour which bleeds the daily wound!
carry it through roads bent by the ageless hump,
through cities...

But I ate my veal cutlet.[33]

'Much good may it do him! And then, later, he need not feel the "bitter sting of blades in [his] guts," for he ought to revisit his own article *Żołądek a kultura* [Stomach and Culture]:[34] "Good, regular dinner menu... releases conquering energies, which lead to well-being, and the latter, in turn, leads to elegance, art and altruism (the hungry do not think of the other hungry)..."[35] In my opinion, it is an example of how far an intellectual can go when possessed by slogans, despite his internal doubt and caution... The crux of the matter is

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[33] The original in Polish goes as follows:

Żżż! chwycić to żebro, drzewce nie z ballady,
które płat cielęciny zmienia w sztandar rudy!
wznieść w powietrze! rozbudzić dreszcz dali wieczornej!
wbić w godzinę która jest krwią całodziennej rany!
nieść przez drogi, który wykrzywia garb wiekowy,
przez miasta [...]

A jednak zjadłem mój kotlet cielęcy.

Tadeusz Peiper, *Wyjazd niedzielny* in: *Poematy i utwory teatralne*, op. cit., 111-112. There are small, unimportant differences between what Irzykowski quotes and the final version of the poem. It is not clear whether Irzykowski quotes an earlier, unrecorded version, or commits a mistake (on occasions he trusted his memory too much).

[34] Tadeusz Peiper, "Żołądek a kultura" [The Stomach and Culture] in: eadem, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, 99-103.

[35] Ibidem, 100.

this: Peiper's poetry is essentially artificious; "literary..." Peiper's compromise is very interesting: basically, he tries to convince himself and others that his artificious poetry is at once socially conscientious. He does to his form what he did with his cutlet: turns it into a flag.'[36]

[III.4] It will be interesting to see if Irzykowski's irony was justified, especially given his strategy of ironising over quotes taken out of context. Peiper's poem *Noga* [Leg], to which the critic made his first allusion, is a very good point of investigation. *Noga* belongs to the hotly debated group of those works which, due to their narrative complexity, usually engenders much controversy. The poem is deceptive in that on the surface it ostentatiously limits its subject matter to the human limb, a woman's leg, which it praises in a series of highly so-

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[36] Karol Irzykowski, "Burmistrz marzeń nie zamieszkanych" [The Burgomaster of Vacant Dreams] in: Jan Zygmunt Jakubowski (Ed.), *Polska krytyka literacka (1918-1939)* [Polish Literary Criticism (1918-1939)] (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1966) 34-35. 'Nie są to jednak rzeczy straszne; często były zapewne dyktowane konieczności wyjaskrawienia swych postulatów wobec mody przeciwnej. Zresztą autor składa w tej książce przecież także swoje socjalistyczne wyznanie wiary. Jest też socjalistą à la lord Wilde. Pod tym względem characterystyczny jest jego serdeczny utwór *Wyjaz niedzielny* (w zbiorku *Raz*). Poeta wyjechał na wycieczkę i w podmiejskiej restauracji je kotlet cielęcy (z buraczkami i kompotem). Lecz na myśl przychodzą mu bezrobotni i hasło: „wszystkim ustom kotlet!" – i rad by schwycić swój kotlet za żeberko jak „rudy sztandar", osadzony na „drzewcu nie z ballady"... [an excerpt from the poem is here quoted; see footnote 33]

Niech mu będzie na zdrowie! I niepotrzebnie później odczuwał „w kiszkach mściwe kłucie ostrz", bo mógł sobie przeczytać swój własny artykuł *Żołądek a kultura*, gdzie jest powiedziane: „Stałe dobre menu obiadowe... wyzwala energie zdobywcze, a te prowadzą do dobrobytu, a dobrobyt prowadzi do wykwintu, sztuki i altruizmu (głodni nie myślą o głodnych)"...

Dla mnie jest [to] przykładem, do czego może się posunąć sterroryzowany przez hasła inteligent, mimo wewnętrznego oporu i ostrożności...

Sedno tkwi w tym: Poezja Peipera jest w gruncie rzeczy artystowska, „literacka"...

Kompromis Peipera jest bardzo ciekawy: polega na przekonywaniu siebie i innych, że jego poezja artystowska jest zarazem poezją społeczną. Ze swoją formą robi to samo co ze swoim kotletem: robi z niej sztandar.'

phisticated metaphors – the main reason for its negative reception among critics. Is it, however, but an exercise in empty virtuosity? Is the **literary**[37] reading of this controversial, much maligned, sometimes ridiculed, poem[38] really the correct and most appropriate one? Fortunately, it so happens that the readers have at their disposal two substantial analyses of *Noga* (and there are several others, but not as extensive, thorough and intellectually both challenging and stimulating), one by Peiper himself and the other by Janusz Sławiński. Comparing the two may eventually lead to finding answers to these questions.

Let Peiper speak first. He begins by quoting the opening four lines:

That hymn of silk above sweet cruelty;
that ribbon, which blossoms from the slipper's soft leaves
and, giving luminous gratuities to the crowded wrinkles of the pavement,
drowns the street in prayer while flickering with light;[39]

Peiper explains:

> While reading or listening to these lines the first act of imagination generates a vision called forth by "that hymn." If this were followed by words whose meaning corresponded to the meaning of the preceding

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[37] Allusion is here made to the four levels of textual reading (meaning), usually associated with Dantean poetics: literal, moral (homiletic), anagogical (mystical), and allegorical.

[38] In addition to Irzykowski's there exist at least several, mostly negative, critical analyses of the poem, including the following: Józef Birkenmajer, "Tadeusz Peiper: *Poematy*" in: *Nowa Książka*, 1936, Vol. VI; Julian Przyboś, "O poezji integralnej" [On Integral Poetry] in: eadem, *Linia i gwar. Szkice* [The Line And The Buzz. Sketches], Vols. I & II (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1959); eadem, *Sens poetycki* [Poetic Sense], Vols. I & II (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1967), where he calls *Noga* 'the synonym of artificiality,' but adds: '[P]erhaps... an innovator belonging to some future poetic generation will draw inspiration from this poem' (171); (ia), "Peryfrastyczny kształt nogi" [Periphrastic Shape of a Leg] in: *Dziennik Ludowy* [The People's Daily], 1968, No. 286.

[39] In Polish:
Ten hymn z jedwabiu ponad okrucieństwem z cukru;
ta wstęga, która wykwita z miękkich liści trzewika
i darząc napiwkiem światła tłumne zmarszczki bruku,
topi ulicę w modlitwie gdy wśród niej światłem zamiga;

ones, that is to say speaking about some hymn (about its sound, about its intention, about people who sang it, about the place where they sang, about the time they sang...), then that vision, called forth earlier by the word "hymn," would have fulfilled itself, would have become more precise, more clearly delineated, it would have created an image. But the word "hymn" is followed by the word "silk", that is to say the word connected only metaphorically to the previous one, the word which introduces a piece of reality which lies far away from the former and is tied to it in an unusual way. Consequently, an image cannot be built and does not emerge. The initial vision takes flight and makes room for a new one. By leaving behind a trace of emotional memory, that initial vision either remains as a fraction of itself within the new vision; or, suddenly reduced in the process, joins the latter; or unites with the latter as if penetrated by it; or changes in any similar fashion and in any comparable manner it associates with the new vision. Thus the new act of imagination is set in motion. As new words keep arriving, the visions undergo further metamorphoses. "That hymn of silk above... cruelty" – bah! another vision arrives, again its metaphoric dimension does not allow for an image to form, but, changing the previous vision, it unites with it in some uncommon way. "That hymn of silk above sweet cruelty" – same thing again. It may so happen that for some reason a word will remain inactive in the process of building visions, that it will not generate any vision; a word may have found itself in a combination, which makes the birth of a vision difficult; or there may be other reasons for it, reasons beyond words: the speed of reading, slow imagination of the reader (listener), some accidental obstacles. Let's assume that the words "above" and "sweet" would be such. What's going to happen? Of course, the word "cruelty" will behave as if it were not preceded by "above" and "sweet" and will unite with the transformed earlier visions; a combination will appear, more or less like this: "The hymn of silk cruelty." It illustrates an important aspect: the inactive words do not stop the process of the visions merging. And now what happens after "sweet cruelty?" We come across a new thing: a rhythmic caesura. A moment of importance. This caesura is not just a matter of rhythm and is not limited to giving musical emotions only. It influences the content of the reader's perception. Also, it concludes one process of the visions merging and separates it from another, which will instantly begin. Those initial visions, or vision, pass on into the storage of the reader's memory. With the new words following the caesura ("that ribbon, which blossoms") another process of visions' transformation and merger commences. This time it is more complex than before, because it occurs in between three caesuras, which are of unequal lengths and yet interdependent. "That ribbon, which blossoms from the slipper's soft leaves" – after this second caesura, which is not equal to the preceding one, the process of vision building will not close but only stop for a moment. It will experience stronger accretion, and then it will go on by merging one group of concentrated visions with ensuing visions in the way analogous to the pro-

> cess described at the beginning of our argument, easily understood. This second process ends with a caesura at the end of the fourth line, and then the final vision becomes a memory and changes the preceding memories...[40]

Agnieszka Kluba questions the validity of the argument: it is not certain, she says, if what Peiper tried to convey may really be referred to as a model analysis. According to the scholar, Peiper uses, or even overuses the term "vi-

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[40] Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 299-301. Wide spaces within the text are from Peiper. Pierwszym faktem wyobraźni przy czytaniu czy słuchaniu tych wierszy jest widzenie wywołane przez „ten hymn". Gdyby potem następowały słowa, treścią swą realnie związane z treścią poprzednich, a więc mówiące dalej o tym samym jakimś hymnie (o jego brzmieniu, o jego intencji, o ludziach, którzy go śpiewali, o miejscu gdzie śpiewano, o czasie kiedy śpiewano...), wówczas widzenie, wywołane poprzednio przez słowo „hymn", wypełniałoby się, stawałoby się szczegółowsze, wyraźniej zarysowane, powstałby obraz. Jednak po słowie „hymn" następuje słowo „z jedwabiu", tj. słowo złączone z poprzednim metaforycznie, a więc wprowadzające odległy od tamtej i nierealnie z nią związany kawał rzeczywistości, zatem obraz nie może się zbudować i do jego powstania nie dochodzi. Natomiast poprzednie widzenie albo pierzcha robiąc miejsce nowemu i pozostawiając po sobie tylko wzruszeniowe wspomnienie, albo pozostaje jako ułamek złączony z nowym widzeniem, albo łączy się z nim nagle zmniejszone, albo łączy się z nim jakby przeniknięte przez nie, albo w jakikolwiek inny sposób zmienia się i w jakikolwiek inny sposób z nim się łączy. Powstaje nowy fakt wyobraźni. W miarę jak przybywają dalsze słowa, widzenia ulegają dalszym przemianom. „Hymn z jedwabiu ponad okrucieństwem" – ha, znowu przybywa nowe widzenie, jego metaforyczność nie dopuszcza powstania obrazu, lecz, zmieniwszy widzenia poprzednie, łączy się z nimi w jakiś nierealny sposób. „Hymn z jedwabiu ponad okrucieństwem z cukru" – znowu to samo. Może zdarzyć się, że któreś ze słów pozostanie nieczynne widzeniowo, nie wywoła widzenia; z jakichkolwiek przyczyn; słowo mogło się znaleźć w zestawieniu które utrudnia narodziny widzenia; lub przyczyny mogą być poza słowem: szybkość czytania, powolna wyobraźnia czytelnika (słuchacza), jakieś przeszkody przypadkowe. Przypuśćmy, że takim słowem było w naszym przypadku „okrucieństwo". Cóż się stanie? Oczywiście następne słowo zachowa się tak, jak gdyby nie było poprzedzone „okrucieństwem" i bez niego złączy się ze zmienionymi widzeniami poprzednimi; powstanie połączenie mniej więcej takie: „hymn z jedwabiu ponad cukrem". Jest to ilustracja ważnego zjawiska: nieczynne słowo nie wstrzymuje procesu zrastania się widzeń. A teraz cóż dzieje się po cukrze? Natrafiamy na rzecz nową: pauza rytmiczna. Moment ważny. Ta pauza nie jest tylko sprawą rytmiki i nie daje tylko wzruszeń muzycznych, lecz wpływa na treść widzeń czytelnika, zamyka ona dotychczasowe zrastania się widzeń i oddziela je od tego, które rozpocznie się za chwilę. Tamte widzenia, czy też tamto widzenie końcowe, otrzymują walor wspomnieniowy, a wraz ze słowami następującymi po pauzie („ta wstęga, która wykwita") rozpoczyna się nowy proces przemieniania się i zrastania widzeń. Jest on tym razem bardziej złożony niż poprzednio, bo odbywa się wśród trzech pauz nierównych i zależnych od siebie. „Ta wstęga, która wykwita z miękkich liści trzewika" – po tej pauzie, która nie jest równa poprzedniej, proces widzeniowy nie zamknie się, lecz zatrzyma na chwilę, dozna silniejszego zrostu, po czym będzie odbywał się dalej, łącząc załość skupionych zrostów widzeniowych z następnymi widzeniami w sposób który przez analogię da się łatwo zrozumieć. Drugi proces widzeniowy zakończy pauza u końca czwartego wiersza, po czym widzenie końcowe przechodzi we wspomnienie i zmienia wspomnienia poprzednie.'

sion" – and his demonstration does not provide any concrete answer to how these "visions" and their "merging" work; it does not give any analytical proof of how these "visions" relate to possible readings of the poem, to understanding it one way or another. Peiper's analysis does not supply any clear evidence of how the words used in the poem attain their, as she calls it, "multiplied senses." The poet commits tautology by repeating the words and verses used in the poem, without pointing at any relations which could lead to giving the words and verses their desired significance. The meaning, Agnieszka Kluba maintains, is still vague, hidden. Peiper's analysis, she says, concentrates on accentuating a series of structural denotative disharmonies, on the notional unpredictability of the appearing words. She contrasts Peiper's own argument with the one by the distinguished literary theoretician and critic, Janusz Sławiński, w[illegible]n some four decades later than the poet's.[41] Strangely enough, she fully and completely ignores what Peiper wrote just before the quote she makes use of: '**One has to make sure that analysing the whole, dividing it into components, does not lead to denaturalisation of that whole.** My analysis of what happens within imagination will not extend beyond acts of imagination. I do not define precisely that act of imagination which arises as a consequence of word; I do not classify it; I resort to introspection and call it **vision**.'[42] These

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[41] Agnieszka Kluba, *Autoteliczność – Referencyjność – Niewyrażalność. O nowoczesnej poezji polskiej (1918-1939)* [Autotelic – Referential – Inexpressible: On Modern Poetry in Poland (1918-1939)] (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2004) 103.

[42] Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 299. '**Trzeba troszczyć się o to, by rozkładanie całości na cząstki nie wynaturzało całości**. Moja analiza tego, co Dzieje się w wyobraźni, nie

three sentences, for some reason omitted by Agnieszka Kluba, do put what Peiper says later in perspective. However, Agnieszka Kluba's reservations about the exact meaning of Peiper's terms "vision" and "merging" are—but only to a certain extent—valid. One more thing has to be stressed with regards to her extremely elegant comparative examination of both Peiper's and Sławiński's analyses of the opening lines of *Noga*. If it is indeed a good point to make to indicate that Peiper's analysis suffered from "parapsychological" slant, and the Sławiński's offered, as she says, a "model" (structuralist) way of looking at the poem, then it is equally obvious that qualitative comparison and evaluation (judgement) of the two approaches recorded some four decades apart—the intermediate development of analytical apparatus notwithstanding—may not necessarily be justified, deceptively convincing though it is. In Kluba's reflection another aspect becomes inspiringly disputable. What she says is this. Despite of using complex metaphors, Peiper tries to make sure that the reader is not lost in the metaphorical net. Apparently, there arises an epistemic discrepancy between his employment of metaphors on the one hand and providing connotative guidelines to understanding them on the other. *Noga* is one such example, as all the metaphors, she says, pale (supposedly lose their pre-intended force, impact) when confronted with the direct connotative indicators: the title of the poem ["noga" = "leg"] and its closing word ["ta noga" = "that leg"]. Agnieszka Kluba calls this discrepancy "oversignification"

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wyjdzie poza fakty wyobraźni. Tego faktu, który powstaje w wyobraźni jako następstwo słowa, nie określam bliżej, odwołuję się do introspekcji i nazywam go **widzeniem**.'

["nadwyrażalność"]. Peiper's "oversignification" is, nonetheless, a conscious act on his part. He uses a well delineated strategy to reduce any possibility of the work's becoming too "open," although metaphorically (interpretatively) open he wants his poems to be. It ought to be remembered that at the very beginning of his published poetic undertaking (in *Zwrotnica*), Peiper avoided giving his poems titles.

This occasionally led to, sometimes unintendedly amusing (and – strange), misreadings. Says Adam Ważyk: 'During the 1923 Kraków uprising,[43] Peiper wrote a short poem, which he later titled *The Workers' Chorale*. He was [always] sensitive to political and social events; the evidence is not lacking, also in his later literary works. But even his sensitivity to and the gravity of the subject could not make him to be direct and explicit. While reading the *Chorale* in its original version [without the title], I was sure that this pulsating, obsessive message comes from a hungry African tribe, the majority of the speakers being little children. This poem is an allegory, which is inexplicable without the title [given later]. The title clarifies all.'[44] Ważyk spoke, it can easily be assumed,

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[43] This was a violent, bloody, and justified, protest of the workers against—without sounding too Communist—their oppressive and inflexible employers. It took place in the autumn of 1923. It suffices to say that several units of the Polish Army, largely consisting of their compatriots and peasants, took the workers' side. Peiper also wrote a play based on the events.

[44] Adam Ważyk, *Dziwna historia awangardy* [The Strange History of the Avant-Garde] (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1976) 58-59. 'Podczas wypadków krakowskich w 1923 Peiper napisał krótki utwór, który potem nazwał *Chorałem robotników*. Był wyczulony na fakty polityczne i społeczne, na co nie brak dowodów i w jego późniejszej twórczości. Nawet to wyczulenie i powaga tematu nie zdołały go jednak nakłonić do bezpośredniości i prostoty języka. Czytając *Chorał* w pierwodruku bez tytułu, byłem przekonany, że ta pulsująca obsesyjna wypowiedź gromadna pochodzi od głodnego murzyńskiego plemienia z przewagą małych dzieci. Wiersz jest alegorią niezrozumiałą bez tytułu. Tytuł ją objaśnia.'

about he expressive third stanza:

For us your song,
for us your golden song,
for us who are black your golden song,
for us your song sculpts the world,
for us the world
the world.[45]

As a serious and seriously self-conscious artist, Peiper had learnt from his unintended oversights. This is why there should be no doubts about his decision to endow his originally untitled poems – with titles. The titles, narrowing down the semantic context, would by no means prevent the readers' possible enjoyment of the poems' "open" metaphorical ("strange," "open") appeal. So, in the final versions of his poems, Peiper first indicates the topic, the subject, the "musical" theme, and then proceeds to dazzle the reader with the wide space of perceptual (interpretative) possibilities. And in this, among others, lies the power of his poetic imagination – and his *licentia poetica*. His poems, like *Noga*, become something akin to musical paraphrases (not – variations), in which the given topic undergoes—not infrequently fantastical—metamorphoses, now concealing it, and now revealing – always in new incarnations, always in new situations.

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[45] Tadeusz Peiper, *Poematy i utwory teatralne*, op. cit., 42. In Polish:
Nam twój śpiew,
nam złoty twój śpiew,
nam czarnym złoty twój śpiew,
twój śpiew rzeźbi nam świat,
nam świat,
świat.

[III.5] To return to *Noga*, Janusz Sławiński begins his interpretation with the second verse of the poem. Says he:

> As a whole, the phrase "that ribbon, which blossoms from the slipper's soft leaves" is a periphrastic equivalent of the word "leg," but in each particular case the groups of words act as if on different levels. The word "slipper" suggests the direct, metonymic bond with the common [prosaic] designate (the basis for which is the real bond between the designates of the words "leg" and "slipper"); the word "ribbon" is an arbitrarily determined poetic synonym of the word "leg" and as such it constitutes the centre of the periphrasis. However, both "slipper" and "ribbon," which find themselves on the opposite ends of the array of possible connotations, are not used in their usual meanings, but in meanings already transformed by the accompanying designates: the connotation of the verb "blossoms" projects into "ribbon," and that of the two-word expression "soft leaves" – into "slipper." As a result, both words, "slipper" and "ribbon," are placed within [literally: "are dragged into"] the sphere of a vegetal metaphor (NB, this metaphor,' Sławiński asserts, 'clearly appeals to the visual imagery often employed by the Secession artists [literally: "of Secession character"]).' Continues Sławiński: 'The metaphoric combinations of neighbouring words; the higher periphrastic entity; and then the reference to the common [prosaic] term which constitutes the background of the periphrasis – these are the three connotative registers which through stratification and interpenetration create the complete poetic image. Following the course of the poem, one can distinguish in it certain groupings of images, each one of which fills a separate segment of the lyrical narrative. The author marked the boundaries of these segments by semicolons. However, not all of these caesuras are equal. Some are more powerful, some weaker. Undoubtedly, the strongest pause falls after the first verse, which contains in itself an image completely closed, which is not developed further. This verse may be looked upon as a kind of introduction, giving the whole monologue a panegyrical tone. In the metaphoric grouping "[That] hymn of silk" the word "silk" plays the rôle analogous to the one played by the word "slipper" in the fragment analysed above (the silk of a stocking which fits closely the woman's leg). In turn, the word "hymn" suggests the importance of and – we would say – the sublime eminence of the extolled object. Concurrently, this word's partial meaning establishes the position of the one who extols, the lyrical "I" – *i.e.* in the rôle predetermined by the poem's stylistic mode: rhetorical and praiseful. "Sweet cruelty" allows for an even more intense lyrical perspective: in the act of contemplating the extolled object the sensation of sweetness unites inseparably with the sensation of torture. This ambiguous satisfaction or, speaking more precisely, the manner of expressing it poetically, references the models of the Baroque lyric poetry, and especially its erotic verse. The signals of emo-

> tional involvement are not something added to the characterisation of the object, but are rooted in combinations of words upon which this characterisation is built. In both cases similar metaphoric mechanisms are at play: words highly abstract in nature—such as "hymn" and "cruelty"—merge with concrete ones, which evoke sensual experiences ("silk" = slipperiness and glitter, "sweet" – sweetness, [sugar]).[46]

The poem, or, rather, the modern dithyramb, retains its metaphoric complexity as it proceeds beyond that point. In its entirety, including the already quoted opening lines, it reads as follows:

That hymn of silk above sweet cruelty;
that ribbon, which blossoms from the slipper's soft leaves

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[46] Janusz Sławiński, "Tadeusz Peiper – *Noga*" in Janusz Maciejewski (Ed.), *Czytamy wiersze* [How to Read Poetry] (Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1970) 137-139. '[S]formułowanie „wstęga, która wykwita z miękkich liści trzewika" jest w całości peryfrastycznym ekwiwalentem „nogi", jednakże poszczególne grupy słów działają tu jakby na różnych stopniach. Słowo „trzewik" sugeruje bezpośrednią, metonimiczną więź z hasłem prozaicznym (podstawę stanowi realny związek desygnatów obu wyrazów: nogi i trzewika); słowo „wstęga" jest ustalonym arbitralnie synonimem poetyckim „nogi" i jako takie tworzy ośrodek peryfrazy; ale zarówno „trzewik", jak „wstęga", znajdujące się na przeciwległych krańcach wachlarza możliwości znaczeniowych, nie są użyte w swoich sensach zwykłych, lecz w już przekształconych pod wpływem określeń towarzyszących: na „wstęgę" promieniuje znaczenia słowa „wykwita", na „trzewik" – znaczenia dwusłowia „miękkie liście", w wyniku czego oba wyrazy zostają wciągnięte w porządek metafory roślinnej (*nb.* apeluje one do wyobrażeń plastycznych o charakterze wyraźnie secesyjnym). Kombinacje metaforyczne słów sąsiadujących, nadrzędna całostka peryfrastyczna, odniesienie do prozaicznej nazwy stanowiącej tło peryfrazy – takie są trzy regestry znaczeniowe, które nawarstwiając się i przenikając tworzą pełny obraz poetycki. Podążając za biegiem utworu można wyodrębnić w nim pewne skupienia obrazów, z których każde wypełnia oddzielny segment lirycznej narracji. Granice tych segmentów zostały przez autora zaznaczone przy pomocy średników. Jednak nie wszystkie podziały są tu równorzędne, jedne są słabsze, drugie mocniejsze. Niewątpliwie najdobitniejsza pauza przypada po wersie pierwszym, który mieści w sobie kompleks obrazowy całkowicie zamknięty, nie znajdujący potem żadnego rozwinięcia. Wers ten można traktować jako swego rodzaju wstęp poddający panegiryczną melodię całemu monologowi. W metaforycznym zestawieniu „hymn z jedwabiu" słowo „jedwab" odgrywa analogiczną rolę jak „trzewik" w analizowanym wyżej fragmencie (jedwab pończochy opinającej nogę kobiecą). „Hymn" natomiast sugeruje doniosłość i – powiedzielibyśmy – wyniosłość opiewanego obiektu, zarazem słowo to cząstką swojego znaczenia określa sytuację podmiotową: umieszcza „ja" liryczne w roli, jaką przewiduje dla niego stylistyka hymnu, retoryczna i pochwalna. „Okrucieństwo z cukru" – dopuszcza jeszcze bardziej intensywnie liryczną perspektywę; w kontemplacji opiewanego przedmiotu doznanie słodyczy łączy się z doznaniem tortury. Ta dwuznaczna satysfakcja, a ściślej mówiąc – sposób jej poetyckiej ekspresji, odsyła do wzorców barokowej liryki, zwłaszcza erotycznej. Sygnały uczuciowego zaangażowania nie są czymś dodanym do charakterystyki obiektu, lecz tkwią w zestawieniach wyrazów budujących ową charakterystykę. W obydwu zespołach działają zresztą analogiczne mechanizmy metaforyzacji; słowa wysoce abstrakcyjne („hymn", „okrucieństwo") przenikają się z konkretnymi, apelującymi do doświadczeń zmysłowych („jedwab" – śliskość i połyskliwość, „cukier" – słodycz).'

and, giving luminous gratuities to the crowded wrinkles of the pavement,
drowns the street in prayer while flickering with light;
which clothed the evening's feet in midday glare,
(and if it be not sun, then because
the Sun only shines but knows not how to flower);
which, worshipping with fragrant warm chalk,
vanishes in the pleated tent of crêpe de Chine –
(and the wind dips in that skirt like lips in a cup)
– vanishes and lives on? the vaults of glittering dusts
bless it? does it tell lies? does it insult fancies, both mine and yours?
does it flow down the loins? does it transfer blooming silver
onto sculpted vases shaped like Italian days, onto hips?
does it use a fan of radiance to caress a pair of pigeons which swell
the shirt like a cloud? and what is its harbour? that leg.[47]

[III.6] But, following Sławiński, certain poetic formulæ are more or less easily explained. The poem is composed of five syntactic constituents whose rôle is to elaborate the initial periphrasis, "that ribbon, which blossoms from the slipper's soft leaves." Caesuras dividing the poem occur, respectively, after first four lines, ending with "[that ribbon which] drowns the street in prayer while flickering with light;" then three, ending with "the Sun only shines but knows not how to flower;" then two, ending with "[that ribbon which] vanishes in the

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[47] In Polish:
Ten hymn z jedwabiu ponad okrucieństwem z cukru;
ta wstęga, która wykwita z miękkich liści trzewika
i darząc napiwkiem światła tłumne zmarszczki bruku,
topi ulicę w modlitwie gdy wśród niej światłem zamiga;
która wieczorowi kładzie na stopy południe białe,
a jeśli nie jest słońcem, to jedynie dlatego
że słońce tylko świeci, ale nie umie być kwiatem;
która, zwołując pacierze wonną ciepłą kredą,
znika w plisowanym namioce z krepdeszyny
– a wiatr nurza się w tej sukni niby usta w pucharze –
znika i żyje dalej? sklepień lśniące pyły
błogosławią ją? kłamie? lży obrazy moje i wasze?
spływa na uda jakie? przenosi rozkwitłe srebra
na rzeźbione wazy o kształcie włoskiego dnia, na biodra?
wachlarzem lśnień gładzi parę gołębi która rozpiera
obłok koszuli? i jaka jest jej przystań? ta noga.

pleated tent of crêpe de Chine;" and then one, a self-contained syntactic unit: "(and the wind dips in that skirt like lips in a cup)." After that, the closing syntactic constituent appears, comprising six lines (what a wonderful numerical series: 4-3-2-1... 6!) and bringing the rhetoric tone of the poem to a climax through a simple yet highly effective means of multiplying questions whose goal is to intensify the expressive impact of the opening "quatrain" (if quatrain it be). The climactic segment is characterised by the masterful use of *accelerando*—to use that convenient musical term—a gradual increase of narrative speed, which indicates both excitement and dismay caused by the fact the leg, "that hymn of silk above sweet cruelty," "that ribbon, which blossoms from the slipper's soft leaves," is soon to disappear, continuing its existence beyond the narrator's (narrative voice's) reach. Automatically, as often in such situation, the narrator (narrative voice) idealises the object becoming more and more distant, seeing it in "the vaults of glittering dusts" – *i.e.* in the sky at night, full of stars (at least that seems to be the intended meaning). This, for the most part painful, erotic excitement—perhaps of Baroque AND Romantic provenance (Peiper would have hated reading this suggestion to the Romantic stock in trade)—continues and now it is time to complain bitterly about the object's unattainability and its vicious nature: the object, "that hymn of silk above sweet cruelty," "that ribbon, which blossoms from the slipper's soft leaves," becomes a synonym of pitiless indifference; it "flows down the loins" (whose loins? does this signify a masochistic erotic pleasure stemming from still seeing

that beautiful shape, which may be giving satisfaction to someone else?); it deceitfully—surely in a coquettish way?—insults "fancies both mine and yours"—the very first and last time the poet indicates his personal presence and involvement in the overall fleeting vision; also, he takes for granted the receiver's similar experiences—these "fancies" being, again, erotic fantasies; the object is crowned by the shapely, attractive hips, which—another successfully introduced simile—recall "blooming silver... vases shaped like Italian days..." and denote something sultry, exciting and desirable (are we supposed, expected, maybe even required, to invoke a ghost of a Messalina, or a Lucrezia Borgia here?); then, proceeding upwards, the object transforms into the "fan of radiance [caressing] a pair of pigeons which swell the airy shirt" – and these are breasts which one naturally studies after having studied someone's legs; finally, the arrival, "harbour" – the question is where does the object go, where will it stop, to whom is it going? The periphrasis "that ribbon, which blossoms from the slipper's soft leaves"[48] finds its complementation in the closing words, "that leg." The whole process has come to an end by returning to the simplest, most obvious, and most expressive statement of awe mixed with regret: "that leg," remaining beyond reach, beyond fulfilment. Where does that whole vision take the observer (receiver)?

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[48] 'On the level of profane experience vegetable life displays merely a series of births and deaths. Only the religious vision of life makes it possible to decipher other meanings in the rhythm of vegetation, first of all the ideas of regeneration, of eternal youth, of health, of immortality... This is why myths of the quest for youth or immortality give prominent place to a tree with golden fruit or miraculous leaves...' Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred & The Profane. The Nature of Religion*. Transl. by William R. Trask (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1987) 148-149.

[III.7] It has often been suggested that Peiper's poetry owed something to the Baroque poetics. In terms of his poetic *métier* and imagery such suggestions, despite the poet's restraint in admitting such ties, are certainly correct.[49] Yet it appears equally valid to propose another source of inspiration, and if not inspiration then—involuntary, not fully realised—reflection of another, earlier æsthetics, that of the Italian Renaissance madrigal, a genre of lyric and vocal music cultivated avidly by countless Renaissance artists. Although the madrigal originated in northern Italy much earlier – probably in the 1320's – and then flourished between the 1340's and 1360's, by the mid-15th Century it was practically extinct, only to resurface in a different – and unrelated – incarnation in the 1530's. And in Peiper's verse there are some references to that 16th Century manifestation of the genre reborn. Firstly, Renaissance madrigals usually dealt with secular, "popular" topics such as Nature, love, everyday life, death etc. (although religious, sacred texts were sometimes used, especially by the English). The content was intended to echo every single detail of the message. It was meant to enhance the subjectivity of the artist's feelings (it is a well-known fact

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[49] Elżbieta Dąbrowska, *Teksty w ruchu. Powroty baroku w polskiej poezji współczesnej* [Texts in Motion. The Returns of Baroque in Contemporary Polish Poetry] (Opole: Uniwersytet Opolski, 2001) 78. Dąbrowska underlines similarities between linguistic concepts present in modern poetry and those found in Baroque æsthetics, both exploring the possibilities of language in order to express cognitive uncertainty of the world. According to her, Peiper was among the first to make and interpret the connection. See also: Adam Ważyk, *Kwestia gustu* [A Matter of Taste] (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1966) 77. Here Ważyk makes a very important, albeit brief, remark on Peiper's poetry owning much to the Spanish Baroque (Gongora) as well as symbolism. This symbolist link, Ważyk says, was against the contemporary poetic fashion [in Poland].

that Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, who had two books of his four-part madrigals published, had to apologise to the Pope!). Secondly, the use of unorthodox vocabulary determined the choice of techniques. 16th Century madrigals were often a field of experimentation. Strange similes, introduction of "vulgar" *topoi*, more flexible employment of rhythm, search for new, often mimetic, timbral effects – these are characteristics of the genre during its heyday. Thirdly, madrigals were a kind of Renaissance chamber dialogue, in their musical incarnations sometimes with instrumental accompaniment. Fourthly, they were normally conceived as cycles to be published in sets of books. And fifthly, most importantly, madrigals were not subject to any obligatory form – it is symptomatic that one of the most influential and accomplished Italian poets and theorists of the period, Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), claimed that the genre could not be categorised or bound by any rules 'concerning number of lines or arrangement of lines.'[50]

All the features mentioned above characterise the analysed poem, although the style of it might be considered fairly uncommon in terms of poetry of the second half of the 16th Century – which is more than understandable.

To put it bluntly, *Noga* is one of the most unusual poems written in Poland between the wars.

Firstly, the combination of metaphors is in itself very unusual, its closest

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[50] Piotr Grella-Możejko, "George Crumb *Madrigals*: Composer in a Magic Theatre" in: *The Alberta New Music & Arts Review*, Vol. III/IV, No. 4/5 Double issue: Fall 1999/Fall 2002, 67-68. See also: Alex Preminger (Ed.), *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990) 471.

"relatives" being Spanish and Polish Baroque poetry; and this, though following the Sławiński analysis—and given the poet's reluctance to draw any parallels with the Baroque diction[51]—is said very cautiously; the avoidance of the conventional narrative imagery deprives the work of an immediately binding narrative fundamental and a strongly defined reference point: the poet explores a whole f i e l d of semantic possibilities. This is Peiper's "pseudonyming" at its most uncompromising.

Secondly, the poem's narrative voice is treated as an instrument of sorts: the intention to treat it as such is made even stronger by Peiper's total indifference to the presupposed requirements of the conventional semantic content of the text (this is one of those works of Peiper's where he does not make use of any immediately intelligible, "serious," "canonical" literary *topoi*). In *Noga* (accidentally, if read backwards the title will sound the Greek word *agon* [ἀγών] – a (poetic) contest! Perhaps a friendly contest between the author and his smart

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[51] 'Prose names everything by its surnames, it registers the real course of events and in that it satisfies certain predilections of the reader, whereas poetry satisfies others through its indirect speech, the speech of correspondencies and equivalencies, the speech of passionate pseudonyms. It is to metaphorisation that poetry largely owes its artistic abilities... **Here to the blind who so stubbornly rave about Baroque**: let us draw a comparison between a fully metaphorised poem and modern architecture. If old metaphors were but chimneypiece ornaments, then full, modern metaphorisation is like verbal fabrication of new building materials, which the poet uses to erect purposeful poetic edifices – fighting with the real course of events and, at the same time, taking advantage of it like an architect who struggles with gravity and uses it to his advantage.' Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 296: 'Proza nazywa wszystko o nazwisku, notuje realny przebieg zdarzeń i tym samym zaspakaja pewne upodobania człowieka, inne zaspakaja poezja swoją mową pośrednią, mową odpowiedników czy równoważników, mową namiętnych przezwisk. Metaforyzacji zawdzięcza w wysokim stopniu mowa poetycka swe możliwości artystyczne... **Tu dla ślepców którzy tak uparcie majaczą o baroku** – niech się pojawi podobieństwo między poematem zmetaforyzowanym a architekturą najnowszą. Jeśli dawne metafory były ozdóbkami gzymsikowo-sztukateryjnymi, to pełna metaforyzacja jest jak gdyby słowną fabrykacją nowych materiałów budowlanych, z których poeta wznosi celowe budowy poematowe, walcząc z realnym biegiem zdarzeń i korzystając z niego, jak architekt walczy z siłą ciężkości i korzysta z niej.'

reader?) he offers a fascinating alternative to the conventionally understood reading strategies, challenging the receiver to go beyond the culturally predetermined expectations.

Thirdly, the absence of any conventional textual semantic reference helps the poet to concentrate on defining the fundamentals of his new vocabulary, his new poetic diction – the stress is now on the concealed abilities of poetic intonations (and intuitions) to communicate on the threshold of perception, intentionally opening new paths for experiencing the narrative. Such procedures were observed within the context of avant-garde musical poetics by Klaus-Michael Hinz, who draws parallels between the seminal German composer Helmut Lachenmann's concept of the treatment of the vocal part in his famous, groundbreaking work *temA* for flute, mezzo-soprano and violoncello (1968) and that of Roland Barthes in his classic, "The Grain of the Voice."[52] In the body of his essay, Barthes adopts Julia Kristeva's concepts of texts, here referred to as *pheno-song* and *geno-song*, to analyse the interpretive/expressive capabilities of the human voice. According to Barthes:

> [W]e can see in song (pending the extension to the whole of music) the two texts inscribed by Julia Kristeva. The *pheno-song* (if the transposition be allowed) covers all the phenomena, all the features which belong to the structure of language being sung, the rules of the genre, the coded form of melisma, the composer's idiolect, the style of interpretation: in short, everything in the performance which is in the service of communication, representation, expression, everything which it is customary to talk about, which forms the tissue of cultural values (the matter of acknowledged

[52] Klaus-Michel Hinz, "Räume der Wollust—zur Kompositiontechnik Helmut Lachenmanns" (booklet notes) (Recording No. MO 782023) Montaigne Auvidis, 9-10. Later printed in: *Musik-Texte*, 1997, 67/68, 75 – 76. Here I make use of the French version of the essay, entitled 'Espaces de la jouissance', published in the programme of the Festival d'Automne à Paris 1993.

> tastes, of fashions, of critical commentaries), which takes its bearing directly on the ideological alibis of the period ('subjectivity,' 'expressivity,' 'dramaticism,' 'personality' of the artist). The *geno-song* is the volume of the singing and speaking voice, the space where significations germinate 'from within language and in its very materiality'; it forms a signifying play having nothing to do with communication, representation (of feelings), expression; it is that apex (or that depth) of production where the melody really works at the language – not at what it says, but the voluptuousness of its sound-signifiers, of its letters – where melody explores how the language works and identifies with that work. It is, in a very simple word but which must be taken seriously, the *diction* of the language.[53]

In other words, the *pheno-song* manifests itself externally, as the sum of cultural experiences and codes of behaviour, establishing a predetermined collective point of recognition for the work and its observable socio-artistic context. In turn, the *geno-song* sounds from within as hardly definable, yet experientially attainable, with erotic (*jouissance*), bodily and gestural additions taking its interpretation beyond convention. Klaus-Michael Hintz stresses that the *pheno-song* satisfies the demands of mass culture which strives to reduce music (and other modes of artistic expression, including poetry) to its expressivity alone, while *geno-song*, emerging from within the language, penetrates deeper regions of the *interieur*. So, if the *pheno-song* offers instant gratification and the fulfilment of predictable (a priori) expectations, then the *geno-song* offers desire – and longing. Says Barthes:

> Compare two sung deaths, both of them famous: that of Boris and that of Mélisande. Whatever Mussorgsky's intentions, the death of Boris is expressive or, if preferred, hysterical; it is overloaded with historical, affective contents. Performances of the death cannot be but dramatic: it is the triumph of the pheno-text, the smothering of *significance* under the soul as

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[53] Roland Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', in: Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, transl. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977) 182-183.

> signified. Mélisande, on the contrary, only dies *prosodically*. Two extremes are joined, woven together: the perfect intelligibility of the denotation and the pure prosodic segmentation of the enunciation; between the two a salutary gap (filled out in Boris) – the *pathos*, that is to say, according to Aristotle (why not?), passion *such as men speak and imagine it*, the accepted idea of death, *endoxical* death. Mélisande dies *without any noise* . . . [N]othing occurs to interfere with the signifier and there is thus no compulsion to redundance; simply, the production of a music-language with the function of preventing the singer from being expressive.[54]

These forces are at play in *Noga*, which marks one of the apices of Peiper's maturity as a poet. It is this short work where he achieves the complete overhaul of the old æsthetic and reaches the goals outlined in his earlier poetry and theoretical texts.

[III.8] Additionally, in light of Janusz Sławiński's elucidations, there are most likely three main levels of reading Peiper's poem here, at least it seems so:

1) purely physical, existential level – based on the most immediately, instinctively absorbed norms of social inter-action (stereotypes, conventions) and the resultant ambitions;

2) ontological level – based on so-called human knowledge (this is what one may refer to as human reality, or consciousness-based reality, the reality individual human beings directly perceive as their own);

3) allegorical level – based on the immanent desire to connect with the values beyond consciousness's direct reach; the desire to connect with the numinous reality.

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[54] Ibidem, 186-187. See also: Piotr Grella-Możejko: "Helmut Lachenmann—Style, Sound, Text" in *Contemporary Music Review*, Volume 24, Part 1, 2005, 57-75.

1) On the existential level "that leg" becomes an object of—largely physical—craving, covetousness, like a new radio set, new car, like any other new object whose acquisition makes the owner proud; it satisfies the possible owner's (materialistic) pride. Through a series of "strange" metaphors and similes, the poet expresses both his admiration for and the desire to posses the leg – and inability to fulfil the desire.

2) On the ontological level "that leg" becomes another object, but this time it becomes an object of investigation related to the poet's – and the reader's – mental, metaphysical, perhaps unexplainable, knowledge of that phenomenon: it (the leg) does exist; it is beautiful; and its shape-inspiring reflections on its usefulness are important. To know that leg, to say: 'I recognise that leg as one of the objects which give me joy' is crucial. In a sense, the leg (woman's leg) has become a part of cultural heritage, and through analysing it we find ourselves close to solving the mystery of existence (at least according to the poet, if the reading of his poem is correct). It may be assumed that the leg becomes a symbol of Bergsonian *élan vital* – the source of that force which generates emotional response, awe. The leg means this: the existence of the poem in its metaphysical dimension. The leg is, in a sense, the mystery solved. Its beauteous shape is nothing but our presence in the incredibly overpowering sea of poetic life which, according to Peiper, shapes (or may shape) reality. "That leg," "That ribbon, which blossoms from the slipper's soft leaves," does exist, and it does give metaphysical joy. The network of metaphors employed in the poem

serves the purpose of delineating metaphysical dimensions of mental acts triggered by the sensual pleasure of observing the leg and analysing its æsthetic qualities.

3) On the allegorical level the poet is entwined in the astonishing mesh of cross-references related to (sub)conscious imagining of a woman and her leg: as a binding, even paralysing, perception of objects of worship through self-sacrifice (or, rather, self-depreciation; self-denial) of the observer: s/he cannot have it; it can only be worshipped from a numinous distance. The leg constitutes an object (that object is like a marble image of, let us say, Greek god), which cannot be attained in a regular, common, every-day manner. But it can be worshipped. It becomes an "unreal" physicality: a monad, a thing *above* cosmic dimensions: "the vaults of glittering dusts bless it"; it becomes a materially present paraphrase of both mental and physical desire. The leg becomes a radiant sign of unattainability (erotic thirst, ever unquenched); the sign of something that cannot be had, that cannot be possessed – in spite of its tactile presence. (The rules of "civilised" social co-habitation apply here.) It is beautiful, yet out of reach, so out of reach (and so out of this world), in fact, that it generates several complementary psychological equivalents related to its shape and its shape's emotional impact – without any promise of the desire's physical fulfilment. Due to the reader's (and the poet's!) fascination with its divine physicality, with its quasi-presence (again: tactile un-availability) – and with its meta-æsthetic, spiritual attributes, the leg, beautiful as it is, becomes a *numin-*

ous object (attains numinous qualities)[55] . It becomes a part of the poet's mythology. His mythology, despite its atheistic foundations, does allow for acceptance of quasi-religious objects, whose material manifestations are symbolised through metaphors. A woman's leg becomes one such manifestation, as does the context of the metaphor appearing within it. The poet, in a courageous act of self-defence, screens himself out from the desire of possessing that leg (and, possibly, its owner), yet he cannot prevent the process of association to stop at something so common – the physical desire which is now transmuted into a quasi-religious hymn. He continues to worship the beautiful shape by admitting his powerless fascination by it. To the poet, "that leg" becomes a perfect (again: numinous) object, an object of his god-less (yet god-aware), emotional worship. But, of course, there is no god-less worship under such circumstances.

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[55] 'The extraordinary interest aroused all over the world by Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige* (The Sacred), published in 1917, still persists. Its success was certainly due to the author's new and original point of view. Instead of studying the *ideas* of God and religion, Otto undertook to analyze the modalities of *the religious experience*. Gifted with great psychological subtlety, and thoroughly prepared by his twofold training as theorist and historian of religions, he succeeded in determining the content and specific characteristic of religious experience. Passing over the rational and speculative side of religion, he concentrated chiefly on its irrational aspect. For Otto has read Luther and had understood what the "living God" meant to a believer... It was a terrible power, manifested in the divine wrath.

'In *Das Heilige* Otto sets himself to discover the characteristics of this frightening and irrational experience. He finds the *feeling of terror* before the sacred, before the awe-inspiring mystery (*mysterium tremendum*), the majesty (*majestas*) that emanates an overwhelming superiority of power; he finds *religious fear* before the fascinating mystery (*mysterium fascinans*) in which perfect fullness of being flowers. Otto characterizes all these experiences as numinous (from Latin *numen*, god), for they are induced by the revelation of an aspect of divine power. The numinous presents itself as something "wholly other" (*ganz andere*), something basically and totally different. It is like nothing human or cosmic; confronted with it, man senses his profound nothingness, feels that he is only a creature, or, in the words in which Abraham addresses the Lord, is "but dust and ashes" (Genesis, 18, 27).' Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred & The Profane...*, op. cit., 8-10.

There are also strong reasons to find resemblances between Peiper's concept and that of the early 20th Century Russian literary critic and theoretician of the Formalist school, Victor Shklovsky, who introduced the term *ostraneniye* [остранение] (*defamiliarisation*, literally: "making strange") to denote a collection of narrative techniques whose purpose is to attract and hold the reader's (receiver's) attention to the work of art. His ideas are still relevant today, serving the purpose of analysing new phenomena in practically any discipline of artistic activity, not only literature, but also visual arts and avant-garde music.[56] These techniques serve to make familiar objects seem unfamiliar and thus impress those objects on the reader's mind. Otherwise, habitualisation of perception will result in ignoring that work of art and treating it indifferently, as a commodity. A visual example of Shklovsky's concept may be found in any of the composite paintings by the Renaissance [pre-Baroque] visual artist, Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1527-1593), in which the artist combines natural and man-made objects such as vegetables, animal carcasses, jewellery, and books to create allegorical, anthropomorphic portraits of the seasons, selected professions and real people. His *Il Cuoco* (*The Cook*, ca. 1670) is notable for its macabre humour: three different roasted animal carcasses arranged between two silver plates make up a horrifying "face" of a cook (one of the plates acts as a hat, the impression made even stronger by a pile of leaves on top of it); turned

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[56] Ross Feller, "Resistant strains of postmodernism: the music of Helmut Lachenmann and Brian Ferneyhough" in: Judy Lochhead & Joseph Auner (Eds.), *Postmodern music—postmodern thought* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002) 254.

upside down, the canvas becomes a conventional still life and shows three cooked animals piled up on a silver plate, the other plate being lifted by a pair of female hands to uncover the dish. Equally striking is Arcimboldo's *Vertumnus* (1590 – 1591), a "vegetable" portrait of his patron, Emperor Rudolf II. In Arcimboldo's painting the prosaic components assume an almost demoniac power by being placed within a completely strange context, hence their instantaneous impact on the viewer.[57] To quote Shklovsky:

> Habitualization devours works, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war. . . . The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an æsthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.*[58]

Indeed, Peiper's mature poetry might be considered as one long essay in narrative defamiliarisation. His style, while combining the modernists' atten-

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[57] Cinema uses defamiliarisation techniques to great effect. A typical example is the Sidney Lumet 1957 classic *12 Angry Men*, starring Henry Fonda. In one of the scenes, the passing of time is indicated not by the conventional image of quickly moving clock hands, but by cigarette butts accumulating in an ashtray.

[58] Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique" in: *Russian Formalist Criticism – Four Essays*, transl. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965) 4 and 12-13. To add one of Shklovsky's own examples: "Tolstoy makes the familiar seem strange by not naming the familiar object. . . . In describing something he avoids accepted names of its parts and instead names corresponding parts of other objects. For example, in "Shame," Tolstoy "defamiliarizes" the idea of flogging in this way: "to strip people who have broken the law, to hurl them to the floor, and to rap on their bottoms with switches," and, after a few lines, "to lash about on the naked buttocks." Then he remarks:

> Just why precisely this stupid, savage means of causing pain and not any other – why not prick the shoulders or any part of the body with needles, squeeze the hands or feet in a vise, or anything like that?

"I apologize for this harsh example," continues Shklovsky, "but it is typical of Tolstoy's way of pricking the conscience. The familiar act of flogging is made unfamiliar both by the description and by the proposal to change its form without changing its nature." Shklovsky, op. cit., 13.

tion to micro- and macroformal detail with the avant-gardists' attention to poetic timbre, offers a new look at both: it defamiliarises modernist techniques by an intense search for new, denaturalised poetic "sonorities," and it defamiliarises the often primitive methods of a purely instinctive organisation of the material[59] by "denaturalising" these sonorities through the application of detailed, precise, constructivist methods of structuring: the whole procedure intended to make poem ingrained in the sphere of *geno-song*: 'By metaphorising an object and incorporating it into the poem's fabric, **I rework it in word**. In extreme cases total reshaping of the object takes place, in each of its properties and in each of its functions. The heedless critic [Irzykowski; here Peiper polemicises with the latter's *Metaphoritis*] accuses me of "overabundance of descriptive poems" and parallels this with the "hypertrophy of passive nobiliary descriptiveness" [as in Polish Sarmatian poetry of the 17th and 18th Centuries]. This accusation is the more strange because, right at the beginning of *Metaphoritis*, he quotes my words in which it is clearly stated that I perceive metaphor as a **non-descriptive** poetic technique. Clear. What is description? It is calling the faculties of an object by their own names [designates]. Metaphor is not a name, so it cannot lead to description. My metaphorical operations [strategies] are in fact intended to negate passive descriptiveness, because they do not leave any object as is, untouched. On the contrary, each and every ob-

[59] One has only to analyse the 'form' (or lack thereof) of some of the early works of the Futurist and Dada schools, whose structure was sometimes reduced to chains of crudely variegated lexical blocks (or even scraps) without any inner "logic." It is very telling to see how rapidly that experimental narrative "style" disappeared almost without a trace.

ject which is metaphorically filtered becomes something different, it changes in word. Sieved through word, it changes to such an extent as if only a powerful industrial technology of gigantic proportions was employed in the process.'[60]

What all this means, if the reading of Peiper's theory is correct here, is that first of all, he questioned the whole "immoderately" ritualised and hierarchical Western tradition of creating, performing and perceptually absorbing a poetic work of art, and then proposed—at least within the realm of Polish poetry—an almost entirely new answer to that question, focussing on a network of narrative relationships between the performer (the poet and her/his interpreter), the work, and the reader/listener (Peiper often stressed the importance of proper reading aloud). The process of establishing that network of relationships would now become *denaturalised* – the conventional relationships between Greimas's[61] *actants* would be socially redefined, becoming one organic whole whose constituents would inform each other via the creative/re-creative/perceptual collective transfer of (not infrequently conflicting) desires.

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[60] Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 297. 'Metaforyzując przedmiot i wcielając go w budowę poematu, **przetwarzam go w słowie**. W wypadkach krańcowych dokonuje się całkowite przepostaciowanie przedmiotu, każdej jego właściwości i każdej czynności. Tymczasem nieopatrzny krytyk zarzuca mi „nadmiar poematów opisowych" i zestawia go z „hipertrofią szlacheckiej biernej opisowości". Zarzut to tym dziwniejszy, że zaraz na wstępie *Metaphoritis* cytuje moje słowa w których jasno uwidacznia się moje pojmowanie metafory jako **nie opisowego** sposobu poetyckiego. Jasne. Co to jest opis? Jest to wymienianie cech przedmiotu ich nazwami. Metafora nie jest nazwą, więc nie może prowadzić do opisu. Moje operacje metaforyczne są wręcz zaprzeczeniem biernej opisowości, bo nie pozostawiają żadnego przedmiotu jakim jest, lecz każsy w słowie przetwarzają i każdy, przeszedłszy przez nie, wychodzi z niego zmieniony, tak zmieniony, że w ten sposób mogłaby go przerobić tylko jakaś wyolbrzymiona technika fabryczna.'

[61] *Cf.* Algirdas Julien Greimas, "Les actants, les acteurs et les figures" in: Claude Chabrol (Ed.), *Sémiotique narrative et textuelle* (Paris: Larousse, 1973); eadem, "Narrative Grammar: Units and Levels" in: *Modern Language Notes*, 1971, No. 86, 793-806; eadem, "Elements of narrative grammar" in: *Diacritics*, 1977, No. 7, 23-40.

This could be achieved through: i) the "denaturalisation" of the sender/helper (*i.e.*: of performers AND artistic sources, including individual poems); ii) the "denaturalisation" of the object (*i.e.*: of the poetic work and its æsthetic substance); and iii) the "denaturalisation" of the subject/receiver (*i.e.* of audiences and their perception of the medium and of the object).

If denaturalisation of the sender/helper is based on making relations between performers (poets, interpreters) and their instruments (*i.e.* poems) ambiguous (the poems become "meta-instruments"), and on making familiar objects (typography, recitation) sound unfamiliar, then denaturalisation of the object (the æsthetic substance of the work) in its totality is effectuated by a qualitative and quantitative re-examination of its primary elements. In other words, the long-accepted, conventional Western notion of poetry as an immediately identifiable visual/aural phenomenon demonstrating a high degree of organisation and intended to give æsthetic pleasure, has been "cruelly" re-evaluated and replaced by a new notion – the affirmation of denotative negatives and extremes by means of metaphors; that is, those narrative phenomena which either did not exist (and had to be invented) or existed on the fringes of poetry, or in imagination only. To put it in the briefest of terms, in Peiper's poetry pure, "beautiful," conventionally produced narrative has been replaced by what is traditionally considered metaphoric "noise." That metaphoric "noise," very thoroughly conceived, generated, shaped and composed/constructed (put within the context of other similar or dissimilar "noises"), interacts with such

elements as, among others, i) constantly fluctuating pace (in Peiper's poetry one cannot really feel changes of "tempo" but rather changes of pace, as in human speech; ii) predominantly fluid "energies" (designed to replace conventional poetic rhythms); iii) multilayered "noise strata" (these vertical complexes which replace ordinary syntactic harmonies that make use of collections of well-defined *topoi* result, of course, from the superimposition of various metaphorical layers of "noise"); and, last but not least, iv) extreme, either very soft or very loud, poetic "dynamics," preference being given to the latter. Altogether, these new elements remain in organic interaction and help change the nature of the work's morphology.

Denaturalisation of the sender/helper and of the object is complemented by that of the subject/receiver – now the poet places the subject/receiver under the most demanding (strenuous?) circumstances, coercing the reader/listener to grapple with forces quite relentlessly and unforgivingly different from the standard axioms and oppressive conventions of the poetic performance (be it reading or recitation). The reader's/listener's (receiver's) ultimate reactions turn the traditional, self-perpetuating and highly artificial process of reception into a psychodrama of sorts, but, ironically perhaps, like the Greek tragedians before him, Peiper also wants his listener to experience awe.[62]

[III.9] Indeed, despite the existing common misapprehensions (mainly voiced

[62] Some writers, including Peiper, note his (own) idealistic belief that the audiences' habitual behaviour and responses to new poetry can be changed.

by the early critics of his poetry, who simply did not possess any reliable comparative resource), Tadeusz Peiper has been associated with introducing the concept of multilevel "open" reading of text, a truly inspirational concept, which predates, among others, that of Umberto Eco's "open form" (or "open work") as applied to the work of art, be it musical or literary. Peiper himself often spoke of 'non-metaphorical' and 'metaphorical' ("psychographic" or "psycho-philological") readings (literary analysis), the former term referring to literary forms, mainly narrative prose, based on predetermined linear development, and the latter suggestive of indeterminate, multilevel morphology, as in metaphor-based poetry. But the issue of "non-metaphorical" ("closed") vs. "metaphorical" ("open") reading is a bit more complex than this, for reducing the concept to two aspects only, "closeness" and "openness," is an oversimplification. In the 20th Century a multitude of formal concepts and procedures appeared, often complementing, but not identical with, one another. Terms such as, on the one hand, "closed form," "stabile," and, on the other hand, "open form," "mobile," "collage," "ambiguous form" have been used – sometimes interchangeably. This led to chaos. Umberto Eco's concept of "open work" is, albeit on a slightly different level, an attempt at putting some order into this chaos, yet, elegant though it is, it is not free from constatations some of which may well be questioned – and certainly deserve to be expounded and put in comparative context with some of Peiper's theoretical propositions.

Let us examine Eco's theory. To elucidate his reasoning, Eco draws upon

the current (at that time – his contemporary) classical music (!), which is generally referred to as the "European Avant-garde." Eco begins with enumerating 'recent pieces of instrumental music [which] are linked by a common feature: the considerable autonomy left to the individual performer in the way he chooses to play the work. Thus he is not merely free to interpret the composer's instructions following his own discretion (which in fact happens in traditional music), but he must impose his judgment on the form of the piece, as when he decides how long to hold a note or in what order to group the sounds: all this amounts to an act of improvised creation.'[63] Eco's examples include Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XI* (1956), Luciano Berio's *Sequenza I* for flute (1958), Henri Pousseur's *Scambi* for electroacoustic media (1957), and Pierre Boulez's Third Piano Sonata (1955-57 –). The Italian semiotician admits that æsthetic theorists employ terms such as "completeness" and "openness" in connection, on the one hand, with authors' communicative efforts to give their works (artefacts) concrete, unchangeable shapes 'to be appreciated and received in the same form as [they devised them];' on the other, with addressees' idiosyncratic interpretations of those works, interpretations always connected to the addressees' existential credentials, their sense of individual conditioning, cultural values, tastes, personal inclinations and prejudices. Says Eco: 'In fact , the form of the work of art gains its æsthetic validity precisely in proportion to the number of different perspectives from which it can be viewed and under-

[63] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader. Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) 47.

stood."[64] An artefact is then both "closed" (as an organic formal whole) and "open" as an object deemed to be interpreted. He then states that the main difference between the conventionally conceived work and the new, "open" one is the latter's state of "unfinishedness." The performer receives a specific set of building blocks and finishes the unfinished. Yet therein lies the problem, as one thing is clear: the works which Eco selected to illustrate his argument may, indeed, be formally "open," yet their formal openness never leads to blurring—or breaking!—the then (1950's) fashionable communicative code which the authors had chosen. (Eco refers to this code as 'postdodecaphonic serial composition.'[65]) In other words it does not matter much if they are "open," or not. Moreover, those "open" works are open in a very limited mode, as their authors did not hesitate to impose upon the performer some fairly rigid rules of how to construct the musical edifice from the provided components. This is exceptionally easy to infer when dealing with the Berio, the Boulez and the Stockhausen. The Pousseur may differ in that it allows for deceptively greater creative freedoms, yet the outcome of these freedoms—Pousseur calls them a "field of possibilities"—may not necessarily be breathtaking.[66] To put it briefly, whatever the performer does (or will do), the anonymity of the decentralised material, as well as its limited formal synergy (and 'open' works **are** about synergy), will prevent any significant interpretative shift from taking place. It is

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[64] Ibidem, 49.
[65] Ibidem, 55.
[66] *Cf.* The "*Scambi* Project" <http://www.scambi.mdx.ac.uk/>

true that Eco later admits that: 'The multiple polarity of a serial composition in music, where the listener is not faced by an absolute conditioning centre of reference, requires him to constitute his own system of auditory relationships. He must allow such a centre to emerge from the sound continuum. Here are no privileged points of view, and all available perspectives are valid and rich in potential.'[67] But it is—indeed and precisely—this lack of such a centralised point of reference in these works, it is this ugly void of stylistic anonymity of serialism, which—in case of avant-garde and experimental works—so often leads the addressee to avoiding vigorously the joys of 'constituting his system of auditory relationships.' For no matter to what extent the FORM be "open" and flexible (in avant-garde and experimental works an often makeshift mould to be filled with stuff), if the CONTENT be not "open" and flexible also, the process of communication will be similar to that of the "closed" work. And when Eco maintains that '[a]n author can foresee an 'ideal reader affected by an ideal insomnia' (as happens with *Finnegans Wake*), able to master different codes and eager to deal with the text as with a maze of many issues. But in the last analysis what matters is not the various issues in themselves but the maze-lake structure of the text. You cannot use the text as you want, but only as the text wants you to use it. An open text, however "open" it be, cannot afford whatever interpretation;' he really seems to have at least partially ignored the project of the American experimental tradition in general, and that of Earle

[67] Eco, op. cit., 61.

Brown (and John Cage) in particular. The crux of the matter is that first Brown, and then Cage—in that order—proposed to open the work to the extent of its reaching into nothingness – and back. Given the subsequent development of avant-garde æsthetics, the consequences of this gesture are hard to overestimate. Brown's decision was congenial in its simplicity – give 'em absolute freedom. In his graphic score (*i.e.* from which any reference to the conventional music notation is avoided, the signs replaced by system of lines and rectangles of various length and thickness, randomly placed on the page), *December '52*, there is really no form, and no substance, or, rather, form and substance are one in the absolute sense. The score may be interpreted, as Brown himself did, in a quasi "postdodecaphonic serial" fashion; it may be interpreted, as Gordon Mumma once did, as a narrative based on accumulating preselected non-traditional timbres;[68] it may be interpreted as a collection of separate a c t i o n s (each of the graphs denoting an event instead of a single note); it may be interpreted as an acoustic, or as an electroacoustic piece;[69] going even further, it may be interpreted as a c o l l a g e in which each graph may be substituted for by, say, a fragment excerpted from another piece. [To digress a little, it seems that Bogusław Schaeffer is again correct when pointing to *collage* as a creative *technique*—and not form, the title of his important work

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[68] Earle Brown, Commentary on *December'52*, recorded in Berlin on 27 November 1970. The Earle Brown Music Foundation <http://www.earle-brown.org/>.

[69] See for instance Michael Doherty's rendition of *November '52*, *December '52* and *Four Systems* involving piano, computer and electronics, available on *Earle Brown. Selected Works 1952-1965*, New World Records 2006 (80650-2).

Collage and Form being clearly indicative of this viewpoint—which is extraordinarily attractive and fertile within the "open" framework. Because of its heterogeneous nature, collage brings about immediate rewards (instant gratification of sorts) to its authors and addressees alike. 'Unrelated elements,' says Schaeffer, 'do not have anything in common, yet at the same time, in a work of art, one does sense the rationale behind this new, unintegrated combination... One more thing seems to be important: collage must take into consideration audibility of simultaneous combinations, its components must be aurally recognisable. If in other compositional techniques the aural result does not have to be focussed on audibility of elements and on analytical transparency of the initial material (and there it is possible and does make sense), here this audibility is significant; additionally, in collage it is more important to hear and aurally distinguish its elements rather than the whole.'[70]]

It is this little, one-page score of *December '52* (and its conceptual side) which in a simple, ascetic way anticipates other similar æsthetic phenomena in whose infinite re-creating not only the author and the transmitter, but also the receiver may freely invest their 'existential credentials, their sense of individual conditioning, cultural values, tastes, personal inclinations and prejudices' – and in whose infinite re-creating they may participate on equal footing.

In many other works Brown and other avant-gardists have travelled beyond the basic notion of "open" form as consisting of linear reordering of its seg-

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[70] Bogusław Schaeffer, *Mały informator muzyki XX wieku* (Kraków: Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, 1975) 30-31.

ments. Again, their solutions are impressive in their effortlessness: they projected onto form the three main methods of arranging serialised pitch-classes, i.e. horizontal, vertical and diagonal. Now form may be built of segments following each other in horizontal succession, or overlapping diagonally, or being juxtaposed vertically (as in Milhaud's Double Quartet, Op. 291).

In spite of its somewhat limited positioning, Eco's concept is perhaps the most universal, the most complete attempt at generalising the nature of æsthetic "openness," especially in its final thesis that '[w]e have, therefore, seen that (i) "open" works, insofar as the are *in movement*, are characterized by the invitation to *make the work* together with the author and that (ii) on a wider level (as a sub*genus* in the *species* 'work in movement') there exist work which, though organically completed, are 'open' to a continuous generation of internal relations which the addressee must uncover and select in his act of perceiving the totality of incoming stimuli. (iii) *Every* work of art, even though it is produced by following an explicit or implicit poetics of necessity, is effectively open to a virtually unlimited range of possible readings, each of which causes the work to acquire new vitality in terms of one particular taste, or perspective, or personal *performance*.'[71] Yet, by taking into consideration the much earlier corresponding project of Peiper, one might certainly broaden investigative horizons.

Interestingly, what Peiper wrote about "psycho-philological" reading is

[71] Eco, op. cit., 63.

comparatively very close to Eco's propositions. 'Decidedly, we have to elevate the culture of reading above the level of illiteracy, only now conquered. In all fields of our knowledge new methods of enquiry beg for being introduced. Psycho-philology (or however we call that science) inferences the author in many ways. The time has come when we should make these ways stop being but laboratory craze, rich obsessions, something exclusively for scholars and science. If this discipline leads to knowing the truth, why should only a scholar use it? An enlightened reader may use it as well. Why should the achievements of science be on the loose, even when they can perfectly cohabit with the whole of intellectual life? Why should not reading and joy stemming from it enrich themselves through new components? Decidedly, we have to elevate the culture of reading above the level of illiteracy, only now overcome...'[72] Briefly put, Peiper suggests that the process of reading, set in motion by metaphors which change connotative dimensions of words ('two metaphors make a single phenomenon two different things'),[73] make it possible for a new, active reader to experience a variety of interpretative choices, even within limited poetic frameworks (as in *Noga*). The poem is "open" to interpretations – and it is

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[72] Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 307. 'Stanowczo trzeba dźwignąć kulturę czytania ponad poziom przezwyciężonego analfabetyzmu. We wszystkich dziedzinach naszej wiedzy nowe metody badań. Psychofilologia (czy jak tam nazwać tę naukę) wnioskuje o autorze tylu sposobami, czas by te sposoby przestały być szaleństwem gabinetowym, bogatym maniactwem, czymś tylko dla uczonych i tylko dla nauki. Jeśli ta nauka prowadzi do prawdy, czemuż ma ją stosować tylko naukowiec, gdy może ją stosować także oświecony czytelnik. Dlaczego zdobycze naukowe mają istnieć luzem, nawet wtedy gdy mogą zżyć się jednolicie z całością życia umysłowego. Dlaczego czytanie i radość, jaką ono sprawia, nie ma się wzbogacić nowymi składnikami. Stanowczo trzeba dźwignąć kulturę czytania ponad poziom przezwyciężonego analfabetyzmu.'

[73] Ibidem, 306.

now up to the readers to proceed in whatever direction they choose. This idea, close to Umberto Eco's concept of "open" work (and, naturally, "open" reading), is well complemented by Peiper's notion of the reader as an emancipated (and having equal rights) part of the process of a literary work's existence (functioning). To him, in the act of creation of a (literary) work, the reader appears as a constitutive force equal to the author. And hence the concept of poetry being denominative of the perceptual curiosity of the reader. The work is "open" to the reader's honest attempt. Idealistic though this early stance on "openness" was – it indeed opened new vistas before æsthetic reflection.

[III.10] Peiper the theorist of the new literature and arts; Peiper the apostle of the metropolis, the mass, the machine; Peiper the protagonist of the progressive urban civilisation – these are certainly stereotypes which sometimes still hover over the readings of his narratives, and which have right from the start reflected the most widespread impressions of his creative and social philosophy and interpretations of his discourse as a whole. Peiper himself fought against such a simplistic perception of his integral system. In a letter to the *Miesięcznik Literacki* [The Literary Monthly], published there in April 1930,[74] a response to Aleksander Wat's article, "Metamorfozy futuryzmu" [Metamorphoses of Futurism], which appeared the previous month, he disagreed with the

[74] Tadeusz Peiper, 'List do redakcji "Miesięcznika Literackiego"' [Letter to the Editorial Board of The Literary monthly] in: *Miesięcznik Literacki*, !930, No. 4 (April). Aleksander Wat, "Metamorfozy futuryzmu" [Metamorphoses of Futurism], published in No. 3 (March). Quoted in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś*, op. cit., 197-199.

author who had suggested that *Zwrotnica* 'proclaimed the æsthetic shift in the direction of "urbanism,"' the statement printed in the text as if it were Peiper's own quote. 'I have never used the term "urbanism,"' says Peiper, 'and not without a reason. When I spoke about the rôle of the city in art, I outlined such a rôle in a detailed way, that's all. I did so to avoid introducing yet another empty "ism" [into the critical discourse]... So, now that it came about that each poet to whom city constitutes a theme is called "urbanist," is it worth maintaining a separate term for such a simple thing? It is as if to call Futurists all those who write about the future.'[75] Terminological issues aside, Peiper made it clear that there was more to his method of reasoning, and expressing it verbally, than many readers would have noticed.

This holds especially true in a certain additional context, for there is also another Peiper: Peiper the author of erotic poetry, to some – his greatest artistic achievement. In his much discussed essay, "Etymologia świata" [Ethymology of the World], Ryszard Krynicki (b. 1943), one of the leading poets of post-1945 Poland and a very important member of the so-called New Wave generation,[76] refers to Peiper as the 'master of erotic verse,' whose *œuvre* begs

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[75] Ibidem, 197. 'Terminem urbanizmu nie posługiwałem się nigdy i nie bez przyczyny. Kiedy mówiłem o roli miasta w sztuce, określiłem szczegółowo tę rolę, i koniec. Czyniłem tak, aby uniknąć rozpowszechnionego u nas izmowania... Skoro doszlo do tego, że każdego poetę piszącego na temat miasta nazywa się u nas urbanistą, czy warto dla tak prostej sprawy utrzymywać odrębną nazwę? To tak, jakby każdego, kto pisze o przyszłości, nazywano futurystą.'

[76] *Cf.* Jakub Kozaczewski,. *Polska tradycja literacka w poetyce Nowej Fali* [Polish Literary tradition in the Poetics of the New Wave] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Pedagogicznej, 2004).

reëvaluation.[77] There are a number of erotic poems in Peiper's output, or poems whose plots include erotic motifs – they are, indeed, of high calibre and are of much importance to Peiper scholarship. To this "erotic" body of works belongs *Noga* and several other poems.[78] In the first two volumes of his poetry, says Stanisław Jaworski, *A* and *Żywe linie* [Living Lines], Peiper included nine erotic poems, out of forty.[79] This number (nine) is not written in stone and might easily be modified – in fact, there are **no less** than nine erotic poems in these two volumes, and in all probability more, to which must be added four more published in *Raz* [Once], which comprises eight poems altogether. Evidently, such statistics are never fully reliable, but an interesting tendency is revealed when looking at the consecutive volumes: the number of erotic poems increases from volume to volume. They make up 20 per cent of *A*, 30 per cent of *Żywe linie*, and 50 per cent of *Raz*. The count of verse lines corroborates this; moreover, in terms of such numbers, *Raz* is dominated by the erotic. Jaworski bluntly speaks of Peiper's 'erotic obsession' in his poetry, which manifests itself **in spite of** his objections[80] (subconsciously?).

It is strange poetry, as according to Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz, who in turn fol-

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[77] Ryszard Krynicki, "Etymologia świata" [Ethymology of the World] in: Jerzy Leszin-Koperski (Ed.), *Za progiem wyboru* [Beyond the Threshold of Choice] (Warszawa: Zrzeszenie Studentów Polskich, 1969) 39.

[78] Janusz Sławiński's dismissive statement—he was talking about *Noga*—implying that this type of Peiper's poetry belongs to the Baroque 'jeweller–confectioner silky' tradition, invites to be challenged. Janusz Sławiński, "Poetyka i poezja Tadeusza Peipera," op. cit., 73.

[79] Stanisław. Jaworski, *U podstaw awangardy. Tadeusz Peiper pisarz i teoretyk.* [At the Foundations of the Avant-garde. Tadeusz Peiper – Writer and Theoretician] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1980) 120.

[80] Ibidem, 119.

lows Kazimierz Wyka's argumentation, Peiper's rationalist programmes – the poetic programme and the social(ist) programme – could not easily be bent to serve the purpose of Romantic-like emotional eruptions.[81] Wyka explains that the Kraków Avant-garde generally rejected notions such as irrationality and subconsciousness. Its programme, which Wyka refers to as "Social Constructivism," did not allow for the employment of depth psychology in the creative process: 'A marriage between a complex and a skyscraper is rather foreign to Polish innovators,' says he good-humouredly.[82] In Peiper's poetry, Waśkiewicz continues in the same vein, the erotic assumes rationalised forms.

Although Peiper, the theorist, never wrote anything directly related to his understanding and subsequent exploration of the erotic *topoi*, or to how they could be embedded in a [modern] poetic narrative, there exists however a brief article—Peiper's usual snappy response to some critics—in which he presented something analogous to taking a stance in this respect. It is entitled "O ordynarności" [On Coarseness] and appeared on February 1923 in the fourth issue of *Zwrotnica*.[83] Says Peiper:

> They speak about Achilles' heel. One will have to speak about Achilles' genitals. There are critics who see our weakness in our groin. Because of its size deficiency? Oh, no, because of its oversize. Anxious critics complained about the excessive amounts of sperm in the third issue of

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[81] Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz. *W kręgu "Zwrotnicy*, op. cit., 42; Kazimierz Wyka, "Z lawy metafor" [From the Lava of Metaphors] in: *Rzecz wyobraźni* [A Matter of Reality] (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1977) 340ff.

[82] Kazimierz Wyka, ibidem, 342.

[83] Tadeusz Peiper, "O ordynarności" [On Coarseness] in: *Zwrotnica*, 1923, No. 4, 92-93. The 1930 edition of Peiper's theoretical texts, *Tędy*, gives the article another title, "Poezja ciała" [Poetry of the Body] and does away with the opening paragraph (censorship?). That paragraph is quoted in endnotes in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.) *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 96.

Zwrotnica and spoke about coarseness.

> Coarseness? No. New philosophy of life! Literary usage of words commonly uttered in whisper does not result from cynicism, or even from the desire to refresh metaphor. It is a conscious search for new attitudes towards things polluted by alien factors. The idea is to restore rights to those experiences, which particularly here, a country of Catholicism and mystical poetry, were unfairly degraded. **The idea is to defend the body**. The idea is to defend those human instincts, in which are best manifested man's adoration of life, health and will to power.[84]

Obviously, strong Nietzschean and Bergsonian echoes notwithstanding, Peiper turns against his (or, *Zwrotnica*'s) accusers, and becomes an accuser himself, staunchly defending creative freedom as well as attacking and reprimanding prudishness, where, according to him, there should be none of it. Here, we are just one step away from a poetic micro-manifesto, defined thus:

> Up until now, our poetry worshipped love in its flowers, but was bashfully silent about its roots. It stopped on that level, where the voice of love was no longer that of sex. [Today] **the idea is to notice profound poetry in the body's own life.** Certainly, the new poets, healthy and smelling of life, think about Eros less than the poets of any other time, but—precisely because of that—they do not dress his statue in tricots. Coarseness?[85]

Despite its brevity, Peiper manages to propose a programme that, contrary to

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[84] Tadeusz Peiper, "O ordynarności" in: *Zwrotnica*, ibidem, 92-93.

[85] Ibidem, 93. The Polish original goes as follows: 'Mówi się o pięcie Achillesowej. Będzie trzeba też mówić o Achillesowych genitaliach. Są krytycy, którzy jedyną naszą słabość widzą w naszej słabiźnie. Z powodu jej braków? O nie, z powodu jej nadmiarów. Zaniepokojeni krytycy skarżyli się na nadmiar spermy w 3-im zeszycie «Zwrotnicy» i mówili o ordynarności.

Ordynarność? Nie. Nowa filozofia życia! Literackie używanie słów, zwykle wymawianych szeptem, nie wynika ani z cynizmu, ani nawet z chęci odświeżenia metafory. Jest ono świadomym szukaniem nowego stosunku do spraw zanieczyszczonych obcymi czynnikami. Chodzi o przywrócenie praw przeżyciom, które szczególnie u nas, w kraju katolicyzmu i poezji mistycznej, były niesłusznie degradowane. **Chodzi o obronę ciała.** Chodzi o obronę tych popędów człowieka, w których wyraża się najsilniej jego umiłowanie życia, jego zdrowie i jego siła zdobywcza. Nasza poezja dotychczasowa wielbiła miłość w jej kwiatach, milcząc wstydliwie o jej korzeniach. Zatrzymywała się na warstwie, na której głos miłości nie był już głosem płci. **Chodzi o dostrzeżenie głębokiej poezji w życiu ciała.** Na pewno nowi poeci, zdrowi i pachnący życiem, myślą o Erosie mniej niż poeci jakichkolwiek innych czasów, ale – właśnie dlatego – nie okrywają jego posągu w trykoty. Ordynarność?'

some interpretations, would indeed offer 'a marriage between a complex and a skyscraper.' Kazimierz Wyka hints at it indirectly, when he says that the irrational and the subconscious were the spheres avoided to a greater extent by Julian Przyboś, rather than Peiper.[86] Of course, Peiper would never allow to be entirely swept away by the lures of Freudian glamour, but in some cases one may wonder if his pronounced dislike for depth psychology did not give way to the opposite stance.

Peiper's eroticism is at first matter-of-factly, rather cold, unemotional. In his *Na rusztowaniu* [On the Scaffolding] he begins by addressing his discourse partner thus:

The day rushes into the hand of bees. Bricklayer on the scaffolding,
how am I to dream, how am I to dream the world on the veil of roses.

Governed by glances
you send at me the silver cavalry of your words,
the silver cavalry and a smile, which from a tower shoots needles into the poles
on which my planks flower, yellow clouds of wood.
Seamstress of dreams, over the eyes of day you slide the dreamy coats of shadow
over the open eyes of day.

The opening two-line stanza is easy to understand. At the moment, a man, busy at work (*cf.* the classic metaphor making use of the plural noun "bees," here refreshingly worded), has no time for anything else, let alone the pleasures of interacting with another person, the metonymy "the world on the veil of roses" denoting a woman, naturally. However, he is tempted by her, and conflict arises. The woman's actions may be seen as egoistic attempts at subjugat-

[86] Kazimierz Wyka, op. cit., 340ff.

ing the man. While analysing this section, Waśkiewicz neatly refers to the poetic ideas of Baroque conceptism, where are habitually found examples of metaphorising courtship through similes featuring besieged fortresses and the like. But in Peiper's poem here discussed, the conventional model is turned inside out (or upside down); it is the woman who takes the initiative. If man symbolises everyday activism, productive action, devotion to physical exertion; if his time is that of day (time for work), his colour is that of gold, daylight, and the Sun, then woman, in this metaphorical context, is the real pursuer (besieger); she is the one who attacks him with "silver cavalry of words,"—silver traditionally being associated with night and the Moon[87]—as well as with a siege tower, trying to destroy the foundations upon which he has erected the temple of productive labour. Here, one recognises distant echoes of Romantic and, even more strongly, Modernist (post-Romantic) poetic concepts; they are probably much more pronounced here than Peiper would have liked them to be, yet by no means do they threaten the poem's æsthetic integrity.

It is admirable how Peiper uses in it the technique of musical *ritardando*, a gradual decrease in the narrative tempo, beginning with a strong *Kopfmotiv* [German for head-motif], setting the narrative in motion at an energetic pace: 'The day rushes into the hand of bees. Bricklayer on the scaffolding, how am I

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[87] Such associations are eminently strong in Polish poetry, in the 20th Century the most notable examples being Jan Lechoń and Konstant Ildefons Gałczyński (1905 – 1953).

to dream...' The verb "dream" serves as a link to the more extended bridge,[88] in which the initial bright, major tonality—"rush," "[busy] bees"—modulates into its minor opposition. The actual *ritardando* has already begun: 'how am I to dream the world on the veil of roses.' This is enforced by the feminine *cæsura*. After a moment of a slightly faster speed: 'you send at me the silver cavalry..., which shoots a needle into the poles on which my planks flower,' the *ritardando* reaches its ultimate state, suspended, almost frozen in time: 'Seamstress of dreams, over the eyes of day you slide the dreamy coats of shadow / over the open eyes of day.' What really makes this passage a feat of poetic virtuosity in shaping the narrative tempo is the cadential repetition of the metonymy 'over the eyes of day... over the open eyes of day,' at which point a masculine *cæsura* occurs and the narrative comes to a temporary halt.

What happens next is equally interesting. One, long stanza follows:

> But bricks I will not throw away, nor will I drop the trowel.
> Go. Go? Go! Fruitful fats of the earth smell round,
> the hymn of bees teaches how to build, a glare ploughs the roost with matches,
> the wind counts my fingers, forces the hammer into my hand
> and, pointing to the world, points at the ovary where the deed hatches.
> Love:
> A night in a shirt of silence after a day in a harness of laurels.
> The flowers which you intend to give me –
> How am I to kiss these fragrant crochet needles
> with which you want to jail me, and dress yourself in wings.
> Go!! Where men build, women wait behind the fence till it's time!!
> Come back at six. And forgive me my words swollen with lime.

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[88] '**Bridge passage.** Term commonly applied to the section in a sonata exposition which modulates from the tonic to the dominant or relative major; it is also used more generally for any linking section.' Stanley Sadie (Ed.), *The Norton/Grove Concise Encyclopedia of Music* (New York - London: W.W. Norton & Company,1994) 113

At this juncture the narrative tempo returns to its initial, faster pace. The male protagonist breaks the spell put on him earlier and, after a moment of hesitation: 'Go. Go? Go!,' vigorously countermands the woman's orders (or attempts at weakening his resistance). In fact, he wakes up from a momentary dream – he now realises that his place *is* on the scaffolding, peopled with his comrades ('a glare ploughs the roost with matches' – this obscure periphrastic construct *may* denote lines of labourers lighting cigarettes at irregular intervals; it is worth knowing that Peiper smoked heavily; he even rolled his own cigarettes). Before this happens the opening *Kopfmotiv* reappears, now developed, extended, enforced: 'the hymn of bees teaches how to build.' Natural elements ('wind') do not distract or induce into a *rêverie*; on the contrary, they strengthen determination. Nature itself, slyly exploited by the woman: 'the flowers which you intend to give me – How am I to kiss these fragrant crochet needles with which you want to jail me, and dress yourself in wings,' becomes nothing but annoyance. And then the rather brutal *stretto*[89] ensues, indirectly quoting earlier motifs: 'Go!! Where men build, women wait behind the fence till it's time!!,' and leading to a *coda*[90] and the final cadence: 'Come back at six. And forgive me my words swollen with lime,' in which a somewhat grudging apology is offered, perhaps reconciliation is intended to release the previously

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[89] '**Stretto.** (1) In fugue, the introduction of two or more subject entries in close succession... (2) The term is sometimes used, alternatively with *stretta*, to indicate a faster tempo at a point of climax, particularly in an operatic finale.' Stanley Sadie (Ed.), *The Norton/Grove Concise Encyclopedia of Music*, op. cit., 785.

[90] '**Coda**. 'Tail': the last part of a piece or melody; an addition to a standard form or design. In fugue the coda is anything occurring after the last entry of the subject, in sonata form anything coming after recapitulation.' Ibidem, 173.

created tension.[91] This cadential formula, which brings forth a possibility of reconciliation and release, is an essential one.

Stanisław Jaworski, following Julian Przyboś who called Peiper's erotic poetry as "autocentric" (self-centred),[92] describes Peiper's protagonist in terms of a Modernist, Romantic-like lonely hero who, after the habitually prolonged, hard and often merciless struggle with his instincts, desires, infatuations – and conscience, in the end decides to live in the state justly ridiculed by Wilde as "passionate celibacy,"[93] all in the name of higher ideals and tasks.[94] Jaworski draws analogies between Peiper's protagonists as they appear in his poems and

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[91] In Polish (multiple spaces between stanzas are Peiper's):
Dzień gna w dłoń pszczół. Murarz na rusztowaniu,
jak mam śnić, jak mam śnić świat na róż woalu.

Pod wodzą spojrzeń
srebrną konnicę twych słów ślesz na mnie,
srebrną konnicę i uśmiech igłą strzelający z wież w pale
na których kwitną moje deski, żółte obłoki z drzewa.
Szwaczka snów na oczy dnia zasuwasz senne powłoki cienia
na otwarte oczy dnia.

Lecz cegieł nie rzucę, nie wypuszczę kielni.
Idź. Idź? Idź! Wkoło wonieją robotne tłuszcze ziemi,
hymn pszczół uczy budować, blask orze zapałkami grzędę,
wiatr liczy moje palce, młotek pcha mi w rękę
i wskazując świat, wskazuje zalążnię czynów.
Miłość:
noc w koszuli z ciszy po dniu upszęrzy z wawrzynów.
Kwiaty które mi niesiesz -
jak mamcałować te szydła wonne
którymi mnie chcesz uwięzić, a siebie ubrać w skrzydła.
Idź!! Gdzie budują, tak kobiety czekają za parkanem!!
Wróć o szóstej. I wybacz słowa wapnem wezbrane.

[92] Julian Przyboś, ""Zwrotnica" Tadeusza Peipera" in: *Argumenty*, 1960, No. 3, 6; Eadem, Kornel Filipowicz, Kazimierz Bieńkowski (Eds.), *Cyganeria i polityka* (Warszawa: Czytelnik, 1964) 31.

[93] In *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

[94] Stanisław. Jaworski, op. cit., 116-117.

the supposedly autobiographical novel, *Ma lat 22*, and those of Przybyszewski and Żeromski: men possessed by their social (Żeromski) or artistic (Przybyszewski) missions, to whom personal involvement with another would lead to loss of focus on the needy (Żeromski)[95] or of life force required during the act of artistic creation (as opposed to the act of sexual intercourse during which woman 'sucks man dry' and deprives him of creative energy – Przybyszewski).[96]

Helena Zaworska disagrees. She points out that while in Peiper's erotic verse that "autocentric," supreme, imperious attitude of the protagonist (narrative voice, sender) is distinctly evident—perhaps as a 'recompense for uncertainty, fears and the lack of fulfilment' (she emphasises her unwillingness to 'get into psychological interpretations')—one may question the validity of one-sided analytical positioning: 'I do not think,' says Zaworska, 'that this anachronistic conflict is to be found in Peiper's erotic poems. Rather, they attest to [his] conviction that consciousness and clear perception stemming from order which art imposes upon life, are able to rule over the dark domain of eroticism.'[97]

The two closing lines of *Na rusztowaniu* support Zaworska's conclusions: 'Go!! Where men build, women wait behind the fence till it's time!! / Come

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[95] Ibidem, 117.

[96] Ibidem, 116.

[97] Helena Zaworska, "Awangarda krakowska" [The Kraków Avant-garde] in: Alina Brodzka, Helena Zaworska, Stefan Żółkiewski (Eds.) *Literatura polska 1918 – 1975* [Polish Literature 1918 – 1975], Vol. I *Literatura polska 1918-1932* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1975) 404. 'Nie sądzę, by erotyki Peipera kryły w sobie ten anachroniczny konflikt. Są one raczej świadectwem przekonania, że także nad ciemną dziedziną erotyki może zapanować świadomość i jasność wynikająca z ładu narzuconego życiu przez sztukę.'

back at six. And forgive me my words swollen with lime.' This is a far cry from the implied ultimate rejection of the demoniac female element. The poem, in which, it is true, Peiper encapsulated yet another take on the age-old literary and artistic *topos*, offers a compromising (hence a hardly satisfactory?) solution. The female competitor is not rejected – she is simply reduced to the rôle of man's dependant, a partner in pastime (and only that): 'Take it or leave it,' he says, 'I may or may not use you – but only after six.'

This ambiguous—not at all "utilitarian" or "rationalistic"—way of thinking is given a tangible variety in several other poems, of which *Naszyjnik* [The Necklace] may be read as appendix to *Na rusztowaniu*. *Naszyjnik* again contrast the two opposite worlds present in the preceding poem, but here the situation is "perversely" reversed (assonance intended) in that it is the woman now who inhabits the world of light and brilliance; woman the conqueror, whose victories are easily won ('to conquer, you only need your eyes; you give a look, you get what you want; everything is so close and cheap, at your hand'). The poem is divided into two parts: the first consists of four quatrains, which may be read as an Apollonian ode, a quiet, emotionally measured, adoration of the female element. In it, Peiper consciously plays with conventions and creates poetry permeated with the luxurious spirit of refined lexical beauty and syntactical sophistication, found in Renaissance madrigal poetry and, later, in Góngora and the Spanish Baroque *culturanismo*, (and not *conceptismo*, as Sławiński and Waśkiewicz want; these were two different, much separate, op-

posite in fact, orientations in Spanish poetry of the Baroque period!) – the latter at first a negative term, now a part of the Spanish literary scholarship's vocabulary (this has happened so frequently regarding progressive artistic movements that one does not need to talk about the terms "Impressionism" or "Fauvism" here).

[What none of the Polish literary scholars have yet commented upon, and this is a very attractive area of investigation, is the striking similarity between controversies surrounding Góngora and his poetry and those criticisms Peiper's person and, to a much larger extent, his poetry attracted (or was subjected to by the token of customary habit). Given Peiper's "Spanish pedigree," a comparative study centring on the similarities between their poetic techniques and respective fates of their so often unduly vivisected poetic *œuvre*, would no doubt yield fascinating results. Such a study is, however, beyond the scope of this narrative.]

Continuing with the discussion on *Naszyjnik*, one of Peiper's greatest erotic masterpieces, it appears that, in terms of compositional (poetic) technique and its practical implementations – lexical and syntactical – and despite his general claims to the contrary – he deliberately used the Baroque reference point(s) to evoke specific expressive significations entailing the serene, reflexive, *Andante* or even *Tranquillamente*, narrative tempi, allowing both for contemplation and immediate enjoyment of the text, for these tempi are neither too fast, nor are they too slow to prevent the ultimate addressees, the readers, from fully im-

mersing themselves in it. Wide spaces between stanzas help putting this poetic compositional technique into the astonishingly convincing effect.

The four stanzas constituting the main part of the ode, because an ode it is, could not be closer to how a presupposed corresponding musical commentary would proceed; the relaxed yet warm and inviting narrative is slow, suspended in time, there are no changes in narrative tempo. The narrator (the sender) stands at a distance, looking with wonder at the object of his desires. It is clear right from the beginning, that he is emotionally involved. He desires – and desires only, for it is not likely that he counts on being desired. "Hope" is the only fully acceptable word here. By adoring the seemingly unattainable addressee, by addressing her directly in the string of "beautiful," superbly conceived similes and astounding metaphors, he gives vent to his consciously subdued passions, which for four rather long stanzas are kept in check to demonstrate his willingness to understand all the customary, cultural (even economic: "diamond," "jewel") and sexual determinants of the situation. Throughout the entire first part of the poem, he is pleading by sanctifying the addressee – exactly like Mahler did in his ecstatic—to use this overused word, but in Mahler's case it is fully acceptable—symphonies.

And then the active representative of the narrative voice (the male protagonist) steps back to bow, offering her, the female addressee, the only ornament (gratification) he can afford to give: 'a necklace of bricks and stones.' This is the second part of the poem, the closing stanza, which formally has nothing to

do with the previous four. While they (the four stanzas constituting the bulk of the poem) are quatrains, in which "Baroque" intensity of one's experience reaches the preconceived level of extra-personal narrative involvement, the closing stanza brings the reader (the receiver) back to the laconic "avant-garde" poetic framework. Despite its concluding "punch lines," the last, fifth, stanza reads, and looks, as if written by another poet, pursuing another—different—poetic task, but without neglecting the contextual continuity of the previous part. It is the æsthetics of the «differend» used here, the æsthetics of the post-avantgarde, as epitomized later in Poland by, among others, Tadeusz Różewicz (which brings Bogdan Czajkowski's previously quoted comments into another prospective) and the New Wave poets – but well ahead of their time, and much differently. What is truly interesting about *Naszyjnik*, is its harmonious unification of the Avant-garde poetics and the conventional narrative traits, very clearly announcing the arrival of the all-inclusive, post-Modern (a very unlucky and unnecessary term) paradigm. Presumably, in Polish letters between the two great wars, Peiper was one of those who realised the absolute bareness of orthodoxy (this statement is made contrary to the Polish literary scholarship tradition), which ultimately led him to abandon poetry whatsoever.

Naszyjnik is, whether Peiper would have liked it to be so or not, the probing foray into untapped territory; he transgressed the space which customs had created for man and his environment – and his narrative counterpart. As well, one notices the ambiguity between Apollonian (*Naszyjnik*) and Dionysian (*Na*

rusztowaniu) attributes, constantly wrestling within Peiper's erotic poetic self.

Your walls will speak light like vibrant silks
like the song of pregnant mirrors
when flower beds step inside them
like a diamond in your ring or the Moon in your pupils.

In a barge of Parisian scents,
on a ray of light = on a powdered pond
time will flow toward white islands, where shouts
only live like the shadows of echoes, a buzz in the censer.

You will speak about the world smiling like a sovereign ruler.
Victory... to conquer, you only need your eyes;
you give a look, you get what you want;
everything is so close and cheap, at your hand.

You will be like a ray
like a ray which sucked on the hottest hour,
like a sentence sown in a garden of arms and firm braids,
like a sound of breasts under silk, like a whisper of thighs,
like a confession.

And I
I, scaffolding's dirty hostage,
will pull out of my pocket
the heavy necklace made of bricks and stones,
and this only jewel I can give you,
I will throw round your neck.
And then?[98]

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[98] In Polish (multiple spaces between stanzas are Peiper's):
Ściany twoje będą mówiły światłem jak barwne jedwabie
jak pieśń zapłodnionych zwierciadeł
kiedy w nie wstąpią kwietniki
jak brylant w twoim pierścionku lub księżyc w twojej źrenicy.

W barce z paryskich woni,

So, what did Peiper really think, and why is his erotic poetry so ambiguous at times? Let us for a moment turn our attention to the often overlooked answers Peiper gave in response to a survey on "modern woman," conducted by the *Kurier Poranny* [The Morning Courier]. The survey comprised three questions: I. "What changes do you notice in the psychical constitution of modern woman?' II. 'Do you approve of these changes, or not?' III. 'What should modern woman fight for?'

Peiper's answers are revealing and make up useful supplementary material for further investigation with respect to his erotic poetry. Says Peiper: 'The

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po świetle = po upudrowanym stawie
czas płynąć będzie ku białym wyspom, gdzie krzyki
żyją już tylko jako cienie ech, gwar w kadzielnicy.

Będziesz mówiła o świecie z uśmiechem uznanej władczyni.
zwycięstwo... aby zwyciężyć wystarczą tobie twe oczy;
spojrzysz, już masz;
dla twej dłoni wszystko jest bliskie i tanie.

Będziesz jak promień,
jak promień co ssał z najgorętszej godziny,
jak zdanie zasiane w ogrodzie z ramion i twardych warkoczy,
jak dźwięk piersi pod jedwabiem, jak szept ud,
jak wyznanie.

A ja
ja, brudny więzień rusztowania,
wyjmę z kieszeni
ciężki naszyjnik z cegieł i kamieni,
i tę jedyną ozdobę jaką umiem dać
zarzucę ci na szyję.
A wtedy?

most important changes, which occurred in woman today, are based on her **right not to tell lies**. The significance of this right lies not only in its moral aspect, but also, most deeply, in the vital one. The woman of the past had to lie in her speech, silence, lowered eyes, long and painfully tight dress, maybe even childbirth. She had to lie! **Today she still often lies, too, but she does not have to.** The change is considerable.' As reassuring as this first answer may at first seem, it also leads to wondering why Peiper used a rather clumsy expression, "right not to tell lies," instead of "right to earnestness" or, even better, "right to say what she pleases." As if he—if the reading is correct—still hesitated to allot women a place equal to men's. 'Today she still often lies... but she does not have to.' This, surely, is a curious spin on what he had already conveyed: although they do not have to, women still choose to lie. The gist of the answer, in other words, may be seen as posited on a false premise about women's psychological qualities as (still) inferior. The adverb 'often' confirms the suspicion of Peiper's patronising stance – as in some (yet only some) of his erotic verse.

Peiper then continues with his answer to the second question: 'Both I and my comrades from the innovative literary camp are convinced that the changes which have occurred in our woman's psyche (and man's psyche as well) are to no small measure due to our work. So, we follow their deepening impact with unanimous joy.' The less puzzling (and disappointing) of the two already given, this answer is no less characteristic of Peiper's own intellectual tem-

perament, projecting his own wishful thoughts onto reality.

The answer to the third question, that about the most immediate goals that lie ahead of women nowadays, Peiper is a bit more elaborate, seemingly very open-minded and progressive – and equally condescending; 'Apart from the struggle against accidental pregnancy... the closest targets of aggression should include those lexical components which belong to museums, such as, for instance, habitual invasion of woman's intimate space by the all too rigid **differentiation between "miss" and "missus,"** the custom which does not have any analogy in relation to how we address men; also, **forcing a wife to accept her husband's surname.** Our language is characterised by important differences in the area of possessive forms of grammar. Those in which the wife appears as a possession of her husband have gotten a powerful foothold in our speech, and therefore it is difficult to contest them – but the more difficult it is to do the harder we should try. **Woman should not be man's possession, not because it debases her, but because it harms him.** It is the owner who should engage in the struggle against legal ownership; when he looses the ownership, he will benefit!'[99] Exactly like in the final lines of *Na rusztowaniu*: it is

[99] Tadeusz Peiper, "O kobiecie współczesnej" [On Woman Today] in: *Kurier Poranny* [The Morning Courier], 1932, No. 227, 16 August. Quoted in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś*, op. cit., 256-257. 'I. Najważniejsze zmiany, jakie dokonały się współcześnie w kobiecie, mają za podstawę uzyskane przez nią **prawo do niekłamania.** Prawo to nie ma jednynie znaczenia moralnego, lecz najgłębiej witalne. Dawna kobieta musiała kłamać mową, milczeniem, spuszczonymi oczyma, długą i boleśnie obcisłą suknią, nawet rodzonymi dziećmi. Musiała kłamać! **Dzisiaj często też kłamie, ale może nie kłamać.** Zmiana doniosła.

man-the owner who must take matters into his own hands in order to help woman free herself from the shackles of convention – for the benefit of his own self!

The same (strenuous?) endeavour at avoiding attachment (however, in this particular case calling it misogynistic would be unwarranted and unfair to Peiper) is seen in *Pożegnanie z żukiem* [Farewell To A Beetle] which, by the way, is not a part of Peiper's erotica, but a simple reminiscence of a fleeting moment in Paris, a leaflet from the poet's travelogue, imbued with unpretentious, gentle and reflexive praise for personal freedom. Both two-line stanzas at the opposite ends of the poem entail unwillingness to become reliant on: 1) someone else's, *i.e.* woman's, wealth ("pocket"); 2) deceptive stability ("tent"); 3) marriage ("bed"); 4) time management ("walls of crystal"); and 5) comfort of a fixed abode ("pillows") – if such a shorthand reading of these four otherwise baffling lines—and the rest of the poem is straightforward, not only by Peiper's standards—be allowed:[100]

II. Ja i moi towarzysze z nowatorskiego obozu literatury uważamy, że zmiany dokonały się w psychice naszej kobiety (a także w psychice mężczyzny) są w niemałej mierze naszym dziełem. Ich pogłębianie przyjmujemy więc ze zgodnym entuzjazmem.
III. Obok walki z przypadkowością macierzyństwa... najbliższymi punktami agresji powinny się stać zabytkowe składniki mowy, np. Codzienne mieszanie się w intymne sprawy kobiety przez zbyt ścisłe **rozróżnianie między „panną" a „panią"**, nie mające wstosunku do mężczyzny żadnej analogii, lub **narzucanie żonie nazwiska mężowskiego.** Wprawdzie językowi naszemu właściwe są ważne odrębności w zakresie dzierżawnych form gramatycznych, skutkiem tego te z nich, w których żona występuje jako własność męża, znajdują oparcie w duchu języka i walka z nimi jest przez to trudna, ale im jest trudniejsza, tym raźniej należy ją podjąć. **Kobieta nie powinna być własnością mężczyzny, jednak nie dlatego że to ją upokarza, lecz dlatego że to szkodzi mężczyźnie.** Walkę z prawem własności powinien podjąć tu sam właściciel; tracąc tę własność zyska!'

[100] In Polish:
W żadnej kieszeni nie rozbiję namiotu

In no pocket will I pitch a tent
nor will I allow to be chained in my bed.

.....

I will not allow to chain my walls of crystal
and in no pocket will I lay pillows of my luggage.

In *Ja, ty* [I, You] this aversion to becoming a part of the stereotypical, traditional family unit is made very clear. A steady bond is not what the male protagonist wants. He does not mind an occasional encounter, but a stable, ongoing relationship is not what he is after, it is outside of his personal space, which must not be transgressed:

Your lips, a footpath of glitter and smiles, today, soldered with silence, are no longer
on fire.

Sometimes love happens to be a romance. Also a telegram.
I want to make your arm an oar, you would like to be a wife.

The last hour of the day reddens on cornices.
The ink of dusk overflows the earth.
In the cool tubs of streets bathes the sweaty face of passers by.

Give me your night tonight. Tonight.
I will thrust myself into you, a type into paper, and become the day when I wake
up at first light.[101]

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i nie dam zakuć w łańcuch mego łóżka.

.....

Nie pozwolę zakuć w łańcuch moich ścian z kryształu
i w kieszeni nie rozbiję poduszek z plecaków.

[101] Multiple spaces in the original, printed perpendicularly across the page, are Peiper's. In order to save space, here the Polish text is compressed into one block:

Bogdana Carpenter observes Peiper's preference for placing a woman in a passive position, at least in some of his poems. While analysing his *Naga* [Naked], in which are found metaphors and similes related to the ones employed in *Ja, ty* [the title itself is telling, as the author put his "I" before her "you"], Carpenter says: 'There is an opposition between the passivity of the woman and the sexual, active, creative force of the man; the woman is a passive receptor like the white and silent paper on which the man-poet will write his words. She has no autonomy and is not even allowed to speak. The man's attitude is ambiguous, and hesitates between rejection and destruction...'[102] But also self-destruction, like in *Upadek* [The Fall], in Peiper's erotic poetry a rare example of a direct reference to the sexual act:

Hunger, hunger of hymens, hymens wide open like lips,
hunger of hymens wide open like lips of a cup,
like lips of a cup of scream and like a note
from whose heart the black star vanished,
took me—metal password—off a halberd,
took me off a halberd, on which I was blossoming so hot,
hunger of hymens open like a note in a cup
knocked me off my trunk unto: unto a hair of foam.[103]

Usta twoje, chodnik lśnień i uśmiechów, dzisiaj, zalutowane milczeniem, nie płoną. / Miłość bywa romansem. Także telegramem. / Ja chcę z ramienia twego uczynić wiosło, ty chciałabyś być żoną. / Ostatnia godzina dnia czerwieni się na gzymsach. / Atrament zmierzchu rozlewa się po ziemi. / W chłodnych wannach ulic kąpie się spocona twarz ludzi. / Daj mi twą noc dzisiejszą. Dzisiejszą. / Wcisnę się w ciebie, czcionka w papier, i będę dniem kiedy poranek mnie zbudzi.

[102] Bogdana Carpenter, *The Poetic Avant-garde in Poland 1918-1939*, op. cit., 101.

[103] In Polish:
Głód, głód błon, błon rozwartych jak usta,
głód błon rozwartych jak usta kielicha,
jak usta kielika z krzyku i jak nuta
z ktorej serca gwiazda znikła,
zdjął mnie, metalowe hasło, z halabardy,

But—finally!—Peiper's erotic verse defied all the previous analyses in his *Na plaży* [On The Beach], one of his longest poems, a celebration of conjugal love and its physical, sexual side. In it a woman and her man are finally reconciled, their respective personal spaces transgressed only when both partners allow one another to do so:

In one another's body inserted, they will together bathe in their differences.

At first, he is a pursuer; aroused, yet playfully, he drags her, playing in the sea, off to the beach, and beyond, into the woods. But then he is followed and pursued – the woman has by now become as aroused and playful as her partner:

Walking farther, every few steps they beat one another with their lips.

.....

Joy multiplied their bodies and fed their souls in the process,
so much so that her laugh, before it wounded the sky, rested on her body,
and his words, like his thighs, were wider sideways than frontwise.

.....

... she turned to him
and feeling how through her body goodness and power flowed like sharp threads,
drawing aside her beach coat wide, she said: it is yours.

In perfect accord of feelings and desires, they approach one another, and make love – this time, in Peiper's poetry, joyfully, totally immersed in themselves and their reassuringly powerful harmony of souls. Demons of the past have been defeated, fears overcome – and true partnership reëstablished, confirmed. *Na plaży* is certainly Peiper's most elaborate treatise on relationships between man

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zdjął z halabardy na której kwitnąłem upalny,
głód błon jak nuta w kielichu rozwartych
strącił mnie z mojego pnia na: na włos z piany

and woman; most elaborate – and most satisfying, most mature.

[III.11] Negative views on Peiper's poetic work should be put into perspective. In simplest terms, his poetry's latent qualities may have been lost on a number of important, mainly contemporary, receivers, but this does not mean that this poetry has no discernible intrinsic worth, even appeal. On the contrary, one could compile another list of quotes, this one in turn stressing the importance of Peiper's ideas and his poetry, and the latter's virtually immediate appeal to a great number of his contemporaries—naturally often younger—poets, critics and theorists. They came to a significant (and entirely obvious) conclusion of Peiper being the very first who freed the language from the "fetters" of the shallowly understood and interpreted Symbolists' and Modernists' demagogical æsthecisim – both Symbolism and Modernism did become a part of the Peiper's concept, yet he analysed them more thoroughly then the other writers; of being the very first to give impetus to the r e a l avant-garde movement in Poland, the movement which fundamentally did away with sentimentalism depriving Polish poetry of a broader view, stripping even the most promising talents of their initial impetus (Kornel Ujejski being an important example);[104] of being the one who should be credited with freeing the poetic diction from its

[104] An extraordinarily gifted Romantic poet, in whom many saw an inheritor of Mickiewicz and Słowacki, another "Wieszcz" [Messiah], Ujejski ended up being a minor addition to the Polish romantic tradition, an 'epigone who thoughtlessly dabbled in the existing vocabulary of the Polish romantic poetry, needlessly trying to achieve pathos, and attracted to poetic effects which, in the end, sounded falsely... He was overvalued till his death (1893)..., but he deserves a place in Polish poetry for singing the hymn of the painful patriotism in the time of slavery.' Kleiner, *Zarys dziejów literatury polskiej*, op. cit., 345.

overwhelming Romantic and neo-Romantic ("Young Poland") tradition – all those who carve the monument of the present day should be indebted to him for his inspirational influence: 'his solitude is a solitude of great spirits."[105]

It is clear then that Peiper's poetry has generated polemics – and its nature, its qualities have inspired an ongoing discussion as to its real importance and value – or lack thereof. Even despite Peiper's undisputed authority as a thinker, theorist and critic, his poetry—to which he attached much importance, not only within his own output—still faces strong reservations if not indifference or even contempt.[106] Nonetheless, given the subsequent developments in Polish letters, Peiper's predictions concerning the importance of his poetry as well as his philosophy did prove—at least partially—correct. Without a doubt those Polish poets who debuted in the 1960s and 1970s looked to Peiper and the Kraków Avant-garde for sources of inspiration, both in terms of the poetic *métier* and ways of experiencing and interpreting reality. To them, he became a father figure of sorts, a rôle model for an entire generation.[107] One could even talk about Peiper's ideas being r e b o r n in the works of the younger poets.[108]

That he considered himself and his poetic *œuvre* as being of the highest

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[105] Mila Elin, "Tadeusz Peiper i jego *Raz*" [Tadeusz Peiper and His "once"] in: *Głos Poranny* [The Morning Voice], No. 120 (Łódź: 1930). *Głos Poranny* was a social-democratic journal appearing between 1929 and 1939. Quoted in Kryszak, op. cit., 59.

[106] Janusz Sławiński, "Tadeusz Peiper – *Noga*" in Janusz Maciejewski (Ed.), *Czytamy wiersze*, op. cit., 135.

[107] Wiesław Paweł Szymański, *Neosymbolizm. O awangardowej poezji polskiej w latach trzydziestych* [Neosymbolism. On Avant-garde Polish Poetry in the 1930s] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1973) 104.

[108] Ibidem.

order cannot be argued. In the Preface to his *Poematy* he states without a shade of hesitation and moderation (a very characteristic trait of his personality): 'Those who carry their heart pinned to their tie, will experience difficulty in finding such a tiepin in this book. They will say things I have heard for a long time. Some halfwitted connoisseurs will join them and also say things I have heard for a long time. But nobody knows poetry better than I, and from the depths of my knowledge I assure you I am giving you poetic works which belong to the best the present time has to offer. In the past I would not have written all this, today I do."[109]

Peiper attempted to develop a system which would be something more than poetry, or æsthetic programme, *poesy*. Rather, it would be a frame of mind, a complex, multilayered perception of reality in which poetry is only one of many possible strata of human self-expression. Those individuals who interpret the reality by means of poetry explore one avenue only, but this particular avenue, beginning in the psyche, eventually leads to attainment of superior understanding of one's self and one's physical and spiritual surroundings. Janusz Kryszak stresses the metaphysical aspect of Peiper's proposition when he says that, in Peiper's view, '[Poetry] constitutes that mode of activity which, by accumulating in the deepest layers of human mind, determines one's spiritual

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[109] Tadeusz Peiper, "Przedmowa" [Foreword] to *Poematy*, op. cit., 30. 'Ci którzy serce noszą w krawacie, będą mieli kłopot ze znalezieniem go w tej książce. Padną określenia od dawne przeze mnie słyszane. Przyłączą się do nich oceny ćwierćznawców, od równie dawna przeze mnie słyszane. A jednak nikt nie zna się na poezji lepiej ode mnie i z głębi tej wiedzy o rzeczy zapewniam was że daję wam utwory, które należą do najlepszych jakie stworzyła współczesność. Kiedy indziej nie napisałbym tego, dziś piszę.'

calibre and projects the most desirable relation between personality and the world. Poetry allows every one [who wants to make it] to realise the common desire to dream because it creates a reality of fulfilled prospects, where nothing is impossible.'[110] This optimism, even euphoria, is demonstrated in one of Peiper's most esteemed poems, where, according to critics, the poet achieves very convincing balance between content and its metaphorical manifestation,[111] *Powojenne wezwanie* [The Post-war Call]. The poem also happens to be his first published in *Zwrotnica*; it marks his poetic debut:

The world washed its face with blood,
Rubbed its eyes with a graveyard, locked up tanks for good.
Today, the white sweeper brushes off the mud,
sharpens the world's fingers and places them on bricks,
lest the eyes seek the motherland on a knife or a fang;
up in the skies glistening new words, fat pigeons, clang.

Let all arms, chapels in flesh, open and,
in them, let the prayer of dray horses weave.
The motherland once stretched from sea to sea,
today it must stretch from hand to hand.
The sun begs to be put to the plough;
the mines are flooded with stars,
where the boatless sails float;
the factories dream the venom of the day
in which your heat will char their loins;
the Baltic yawns, and then suddenly feels shy.
It is so hot
that one could build a world out of a single hair
let alone a hand, raised high.

The unwritten sheets of earth are awaiting new pens.
We are marching on our soil,

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[110] '[Poezja jest] tym rodzajem aktywności, która, kumulując się w najgłębszych warstwach psychicznych człowieka, decyduje o jego formacie duchowym, projektuje najbardziej pożądany wymiar osobowości i świata. Pozwala zrealizować właściwą każdemu potrzebę marzeń, stwarza bowiem rzeczywistość spełnionej perspektywy, dla której nie ma rzeczy niemożliwych.' Kryszak, op. cit., 62-63.

[111] Edward Balcerzan, *Poezja polska w latach 1918-1939* [Polish Poetry in the Years 1918-1939] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1996) 49.

a wall of brows on the march.
A step draws a step,
a hand pushes a hand.
Torn from the veins of day
we are thrown into the current by a gush of oil.

We are marching to carve a new dance on every old church;
enemy in front? one leap!
pain? it's only pain, if that!
Sooth, there are a thousand of us too few,
but tomorrow we will be a fame to many;
– do not complain if you're left in the lurch!

We... To pluck moss; to pluck. To be a wedge
which stings and binds. To march; to sew beds into raging snow,
to tear fog apart with a spark, and a rotten thread on a stone hedge,
to be a song in a streetlamp, a foot in a flower tow,
to make saliva another part of speech,
words – entrust them to both hands to guard,
into the black army of nightmares throw a fist to teach:
it is all ours, won hard![112]

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[112] Tadeusz Peiper, *Poematy i utwory teatralne*, op. cit., 33-32. In Polish:
Świat krwią zmył twarz.
Oczy przetarł cmentarzem, czołgi złożył w szufladzie.
Dzisiaj biały działa brusiarz;
ostrzy dłoń świata i na cegłach ją kładzie,
aby oczy nie szukały ojczyzny na ostrzu czy zębie;
nowe słowa lśnią na niebie, brzuchate gołębie.

Niech się ramiona, kaplice w mięsie, otworzą
i niech tka się w nich modlitwa ciężarowych koni.
Była kiedyś od morza do morza,
dziś musi być od dłoni do dłoni.
Słońce błaga byście je zaprzęgli do pługa;
kopalnie są zalane gwiazdami
po których płyną żagle bez łodzi;
fabryki śnią jad dnia
w którym je żar wasz zawęgli do uda;
bałtyk ziewa, potem nagle się płoni.
Jest tak gorąco
że można by świat zbudować z włosa,
a cóż dopiero z dłoni.

Niezapisane arkusze ziemi czekają nowych piór,
Idziemy,
mur czół w marszu.
Krok rwie krok,
dłoń pcha dłoń,

The same fervour is apparent in his short hymn to one of his favourite objects, the city, metropolis. The poem is called exactly this:, *Miasto* [The City]:

With fists of the fighting dream
the city screwed itself into earth.
Man
dressed in a steamroller of heat
came to live inside his own hand.
Sky:
The title page of a missing book.[113]

One may sum up his propositions thusly: Peiper's theoretical and artistic achievements occurred during the most productive twelve to thirteen years of his career as a theorist, poet, critic and polemist (1922 – 1935). Of special interest here is his work in the areas of theory and poetic self-expression. His two major texts, *Nowe usta* [The New Lips] (1925) and *Tędy* [This Way] (1930) pro-

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w nurt wziął nas z żył tryskający olej.

Idziemy nowy taniec rzeźbić na każdym starym kościele;
wróg? jeden skok!
ból? tylko boli!
Prawda, jest nas dzisiaj o tysiąc za mało,
lecz jutro będzie nas o sławę za wiele.

My... Mech rwać; rwać. Być trzpieniem
który kłuje i spina. Iść; wszyć łoże w zamiecie,
mgłę drzeć skrą, a zgniłą nić kamieniem,
być pieśnią w latarni, nogą na kwiecie,
ze śliny uczynić dziesiątą część mowy,
Słowa – dać je dłoniom pod straż,
w czarną armię mar rzucić kułak nowy;
nasz!

[113] Ibidem, 38. In Polish:
Miasto wśrubowało się w ziemię
pięściami walczącego marzenia.
Człowiek
odziany walcem upału
zamieszkał w swojej własnej dłoni.
Niebo:
karta tytułowa zaginionej książki.

vide fruitful material for discourse that surrounds his poetic work of the avant-garde period. What Peiper aimed at was a total re-thinking of poetry as an instrument for shaping reality; poetry, it must be added, that was independent from Romantic, futurist, or classicist models, or, any previous models whatsoever – and in that he was remarkably, if self-destructively, successful. To him, poetry results from reality that surrounds it organically. The structure of the poem is a consequence of that reality. Simultaneously, poetry will shape reality in that it will impose its values over a period of time and will work its way into people's minds. Peiper was fully aware of the elitist character of modern poetry as he saw it. He even made a statement that his poetry may at present only speak to the chosen "twelve" (the reference is obvious). Yet, for the moment at least, he demonstrated an unshakeable, idealistic belief in modern, "esoteric" poetry's ability to communicate. As he once said: 'One of the most profound causes of the crisis in Polish poetry is... the idea of the work for all, the work which would "speak to everybody..." In my opinion, in order for the literature to fulfil its goal, it has to differentiate within itself. It has to differentiate within and split itself into the following, separate directions: literature for the farmers; literature for the intelligentsia; literature for the proletariat; literature for the bourgeois; and the elitist one. Unfortunately, we often think that the literary works should aim at everybody. As a result, we have literature for neither the workers nor the intellectual elite.

'In practice, writing for everybody leads our poets to writing for an average reader, in the hope that they will appeal to the more as well as less sophisticated audiences. Well, we all know this "average" reader..."[114] He then indicates the necessity of following the more specialised forms of expression. Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz correctly recognises Peiper's poetic concept as a specific metonymy, where poetic act, genetically resulting from reality, is subjected to that reality only in so far as poetry reflects it, reflects its epoch, but while drawing inspiration from it, it explores those sources of inspiration independently, through its own methods,[115] as in the poem *Z Górnego Śląska* [From Upper Silesia; inspired by Poland's acquisition of that rich industrial region whose landscape is dominated by coal mines and foundries]:

Colonnade of chimneys, iron gallery stalls,
roof of clouds which steam off the sweating skin,
prayer of fire, pestilence of might,
muscle-made walls.

We will translate coal into fable.
From the black guts of earth
we shall dig out a palace of gold
with pains which do not pain
with a miracle of white alchemy:
with will.
We shall encircle the coal with faith free of biers,
we shall people it with thoughts free of night.
In the red crowd of lips
we will rest on beds made of song.
What shadow shall extinguish, laughter will set alight.
We will translate coal into gold,
gold into fable.[116]

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[114] Tadeusz Peiper, "O przyczynach kryzysu poezji" [About the Causes of Crisis in Poetry] An interview by Aleksander Maliszewski, *Robotnik*, No. 218, 1931; reprinted in Tadeusz Peiper, *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś*, op. cit., 237.
[115] Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz. *W kręgu "Zwrotnicy*, op. cit., 68 ff.
[116] Tadeusz Peiper, *Poematy i utwory teatralne*, op. cit., 35 In Polish:

[III.12] During the period between 1922 and 1939, Peiper wrote a great deal on a new understanding of the literary matter, mainly within the realm of poetry. It is safe to say that he primarily considered himself a poet and a thinker, and then a prose writer or a dramatist. His theory of the poetic work of art is based on several main principles already delineated in *Nowe usta* (to which Ferdinand Léger contributed drawings),[117] and then given the final form in *Tędy*, a collection of articles published between 1922 and 1929 – his major statements dealing with the subject of poem and its structure, poetry and its place in the modern world.

Peiper begins with an extensive analysis of Romantic poetry to which he also includes Impressionism and artists (such as Przybyszewski or Tetmajer),

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Kolumnada kominów, galerie z żelaza,
dach z chmur, które parują ze spoconej skóry,
ognia kazanie, siły zaraza,
z mięśni mury.

Będziemy węgiel tłomaczyć na bajkę.
Z czarnych jelit Ziemi
wydobędziemy pałac ze złota
bólami które nie bolą
cudem białej alchemii:
wolą.
Okolimy go wiarą bez mar,
zaludnimy go myślami bez nocy.
W czerwonym tłumie warg
na łożach z pieśni będziemy odpoczywali.
Co dzień zagasi, to uśmiech zapali.
Będziemy węgiel tłumaczyć na złoto,
złoto na bajkę.

[117] First published as Tadeusz Peiper, *Nowe usta. Odczyt o poezji*. Rysunkami ozdobił Fernand Léger (Lwów/Lviv: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze "Ateneum," 1925).

active at the turn of the century[118] – here the "Romantic" is understood in broader terms, as a movement or rather general tendency, inclination to treat poetry as a subjective expression of the author's personality. He also speaks at length about the ideas of wide accessibility of art and folk influences on artistic writing as constituting intricate features of Romantic writing, at least in Poland.

In the course of his theoretical argument, Peiper presents four pairs of oppositions to creative approaches characteristic of Romantic writing on the one hand, and modern writing on the other.

1° Romantic directness of the feeling (expression, expressiveness) vs. modern "expressive equivalence." By "expressive equivalence" (or "equivalence of feelings") Peiper meant the employment of metaphor – 'poetry creates equivalencies of feelings,' he said, and must by no means name feelings directly. It is up to prose to remain directly precise: 'prose names things, poetry offers them pseudonyms.' The poetic language has an intricate dimension of what the formalists would refer to as 'defamiliarisation'. Also, the concept of poetic "equivalence" places Peiper's theory very close to the ideas of Victor Shklovsky as well as Roman Jakobson and, automatically, the Prague Linguistic Circle – a connection which has already been investigated at some length. Also, Peiper's insistence on the necessity of employing "strange" metaphors, on the necessity of stripping poetry of its usual vestiges of Romanticism, on the necessity of re-

[118] Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy, Nowe usta*, op. cit. 333.

forming the poetic language, and on the necessity on writing poetry to be HEARD, not just READ (again: he insisted his poetry functioned best while presented in public), is similar to Bogusław Schaeffer's musical concept of "de-naturisation." [A word of explanation on Schaeffer, virtually unknown to the English language-based scholarship: Schaeffer coined the term in relation to the new manner of the treatment of sound models in contemporary Western music as opposed to the old, "natural," conventional methods of shaping musical phenomena (hence 'denaturisation'). Says Schaeffer: 'Using deformations the composer creates new sound qualities. In new music, however, there exist ways of deploying timbres that result from the application of special transformation procedures. . . . [W]e are able to observe a range of denaturalising techniques, applied in composition not for themselves in themselves, but for a broadening of the sound-language. As may be seen they can be perceived both 'literally' and in terms of precisely measured parameters... It is possible to discuss the term 'denaturisation' itself. In essence it is not so much a question of describing new sound qualities as the emphasizing of a divergence from conventions existing to the present time."[119] Schaeffer also draws parallels between contemporary composers' tendencies to 'compose,' to form (denaturise) even a single sound, and the 'expressive' performing techniques known in jazz (slides, shakes, rips, growls etc.); he also explains the importance of such microformal

[119] Bogusław Schaeffer, *Introduction to Composition* (Kraków: PWM, 1976) 44

procedures.[120] Here, Schaeffer's concept is projected onto larger constitutive literary units such as verses, sentences, or syntax. This interdisciplinary context establishes a fascinating field for further study. It ought to be kept in mind that Schaeffer also happens to be on of Poland's most successful and most original playwrights, and whose writing technique owes very much to his narrative and formal designs first introduced in his music compositions.]

2° Romantic directness of spontaneous creative acts vs. necessity to "choosing," "composing" poems in the present day. The "unruly" Romantic expression of an author's personality must be suppressed and replaced by focusing on the artistic métier, on the poem itself by organically unifying its form and content. This idea places Peiper very close to the New Critics, but what makes him different from them is his considering the poem within the broader social, perceptive context. Here the connections between Eliot's "objective correlative" and Peiper's own concept of poetic objectivity also deserves to be explored in the future.

3° Romantic idea of "art for everybody" vs. the idea of art as a "two-level" phenomenon. Peiper maintains that only avant-garde art expressing the present is capable of pushing consciousness toward its future. Experiment has to be allowed and accepted. Otherwise, the development of art will be stalled and the potential audience (no matter how small) will not reach the higher states of social consciousness. So, the avant-garde creation is the first level at which the

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[120] Bogusław Schaeffer, *Muzyka XX wieku* (Kraków: PWM, 1975) 314-318; see also his *Mały informator muzyki XX wieku*, op. cit., 102-107

art must function in the society. Later, the discoveries of creative, avant-garde artists are absorbed and made more accessible by artists of lesser talents who, nevertheless, contribute to the overall development of social psyche. And this is the second level at which contemporary art functions. Inevitably, such a construct puts Peiper at odds with Marxist literary critics, therefore it seems essential to reassess their arbitrary claim that he relied heavily on concepts characteristic of their approach. At the same time it is true that later on Peiper redefined his position, and cultivated style—especially in his occasional poetry of the Second World War period—akin to the ideals of socialist realism. His later development notwithstanding, the final analysis of this aspect of Peiper's theory concurs (precedes by at least two decades) Umberto Eco's model of 'open' vs. 'closed' work.

4° Romantic idea of tying the development of high art to drawing inspiration from folklore vs. the idea of *contemporaneity* of art. In his famous *Miasto, masa, maszyna* [The Metropolis, the Mass, the Machine], first published in *Zwrotnica*, in 1922, and then reprinted in *Tędy*, Peiper subjects the then-present social processes to an analysis which, in the end, offers the concept of the new art being a reflection of new social consciousness. Therefore, contemporary literature (and especially poetry) is very well suited to establishing new models of grammar, style, composition, rhetoric, prosody, metrics and rhythm, inspired by the development of the modern society. In turn, literature will help to achieve the goal of enhancing the striving toward social (cultural, economic)

(r)evolution. Here again comparisons might be offered between Peiper's own 'leftist' theory and the Marxist position.

In addition, Peiper developed a theory of rhyme (later elaborated by the inclusion of rhythm) which is an elegant and original - if somewhat idealistic - proposition linking the development of human thought to the development of rhyming techniques. The rhyme, according to Peiper, is becoming more and more sophisticated. From the simplest, primeval model of *aabb*, it evolved into more complex models such as *abab*, *abba* and, further yet, *abbaabba cdc dcd* (as in the sonnet) and many others. The modern rhyme, says Peiper, has become even more complicated through:

1) lengthening single verses so as to make even simple rhymes such as *aa* occur far apart,

2) "broadening of the rhyming phrase" - lengthening distances between similar rhymes by including other rhymes in between, i.e. *abcd abcd* etc.,

and

3) expanding the available pool of "regular rhyme" by the inclusion of rhymes based on a variety of assonances.[121]

Peiper maintains that these techniques of rhyming complexity lead to changing the meaning of the word. They also lead to inventing rhyming associations between words whose semantic dimensions may differ radically. The two aforementioned processes lead, in turn, to broadening human perception

[121] The poem *Powojenne wezwanie* [The Post-war Call], quoted above, well illustrates these three points.

of the reality itself – the rhyme reflects the reality and the reality reflects changes in poetic techniques. The art 'has to help and speed up the evolution of the society towards modernity.' [122] He observed that the semantic distancing of rhymes had a profound impact on poetry and not only poetry, but on human thought in general. A huge semantic distance, which divided new rhymes, needed to be overcome. New semantic phenomena needed to be linked and unified. The movements, motions of imagination were changing, distant pieces of reality were becoming connected. Many displacements and replacements, unknown until recently, were occurring. Poetic figures, metaphors etc. had to adapt to their new functions.

[III.13] One of Peiper's most original ideas was that of what he referred to as the "process of blossoming." In brief, he proposed a formal strategy based on lengthening the syntactic units within a poem. Starting with an initial statement, such as a single, compact verse, the poem would evolve by adding additional elements to that verse. In other words, he absorbed, and masterfully combined, the musical ideas of theme, repetition and development (as known in the so-called sonata form). In (simplified) terms of formal logic, the poem would develop from statement 'x' to 'x + y' to 'x + y + z' and so on and so forth. Peiper used this formal technique in a number of poems, starting with a single verse and then building large formal units based on it. His poem *Chorał robot-*

[122] Stanisław Jaworski, "Przedmowa" in Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy, Nowe usta* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1972) 9

ników [The Workers' Chorale], which especially, when published without the title, gave Adam Ważyk an impressions of being a kind of African tribal incantation, yet praised for its elegance and metaphorical effectiveness, makes a good example of the technique:

Shadow,
black bird,
black bird of our sighs
suckles the udder of gold, suckles the sun,
black bird.

Aaa! we want to have it.
We very much want to have it.
To have!
To have!
We want to have that udder of gold.

For us your song,
for us your golden song,
for us who are black your golden song,
for us your song sculpts the world,
for us the world
the world.

We are looking. Looking? We steal with our eyes!
We steal, we steal, we steal
with our eyes.
The smoke has a knife,
it has the knife of our sighs,
It has the knife,
It slices the sun into pennies and pennies it gives away.
The smoke has a knife
and slices.[123]

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[123] Tadeusz Peiper, *Poematy i utwory teatralne*, op. cit., 42. In Polish:
Cień,
czarny ptak,
czarny ptak naszych westchnień
ssie złote wymię, ssie słońce,
czarny ptak.

Aaa, my chcemy je mieć,
My bardzo chcemy je mieć.
Mieć!
Mieć!

Here, as everywhere else, mutual influences of various forms of creative activity are obvious. Motions of the poetic imagination, connecting distant layers of reality, are supported by the gradual enlargement of the field of human activity, the development of communication, stretching the horizons of thought. The new poetry influenced the human thought. The intellectual effort, necessary to grasp the new rhyme, made the world look differently.[124]

Therefore, poetry exists in a state of constant flux and develops in conjunction with other manifestations of human thought, influencing them and being influenced at the same time. As indicated earlier in passing , this diachronic concept is clearly (and strikingly) similar to the ideas present in the mature phase of Russian formalism (Jakobson, Tynjanov), especially those introduced in the article/manifesto "Problems in the Study of Literature and Language."[125]

Złote wymię chemy mieć.

Nam twój śpiew,
nam złoty twój śpiew,
nam czarnym złoty twój śpiew,
twój śpiew rzeźbi nam świat,
nam świat,
świat.

Patrzymy. Patrzymy? Kradniemy oczyma!
Kradniemy, kradniemy, kradniemy
oczyma.
Dym ma nóż,
ma nóż naszych westchnień,
ma nóż,
kraje słońce na grosze i grosze rozdaje.
Dym ma nóż
i kraje.

[124] Tadeusz Peiper, "Droga rymu" [The Rhyme's Way] in *Tędy, Nowe usta*, op. cit., 72.
[125] Jurij Tynjanov, Roman Jakobson, "Problems in the Study of Literature and Language" in

It is noteworthy that both Peiper and his Russian counterparts published their statements at almost the same time – Tynjanov and Jakobson in 1928, and Peiper in 1929. But what sets Peiper apart from the formalists is, among others, his approach to the word. In his opinion, the word does not count, it does not exist but within the context of the sentence, phrase. Peiper rejects the concept of the word as an autonomous phenomenon (hence his disagreement with the futurists), capable of carrying the meaning. It is the sentence which gives the word its meaning through establishing a supporting context. Poetry, says Peiper, is 'an art of composing beautiful sentences.'

[III.14] Julian Przyboś states: 'Peiper's theoretical and critical writings glitter with classic perfection, his poems – not all of them; only some can be placed side by side with his flawless [critical] prose. However, who knows, perhaps the idea of poetic diction from which image is removed might be classified as one of those which will influence the cybernetic future...' Continues Przyboś: 'Peiper's theory of poetry is likely the first since [Mikołaj] Rej which is neither translation nor paraphrase of a foreign poetics. In Poland never had any one proposed such an individual and complete poetic theory... When in the West the never-ending Bacchanalia of "irrationalisms" and cult of the subconscious was unleashed, here, in Poland, he created an original poetic doctrine, which promulgated the ideas of order, precision, and meticulous craftsmanship in the

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Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska (Eds.), *Readings in Russian Poetics. Formalist and Structuralist Views* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971) 79-81

artistic work."[126]

Jan Brzękowski admits: '[At first] [m]y evaluation of Peiper's poetry was less positive. Under the influence of Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, in poetry I valued that, which could be captured with sight – visual elements and poetic image. This is why the cerebral metaphor of Peiper's, its excessive conceptualism, spoke to me to a lesser extent. At that time, I was not able to appreciate fully the poetry present in many of his poems. I have to confess that today my assessment of Peiper the poet is much more positive. In his poems I have discovered much beauty, which I had not sensed before. After all those years, Peiper's poems have become more precious, they have become better, which is a rare thing, because usually the poems taken out of their temporal context age in an ugly way."[127]

Zygmunt Leśnodorski, writer and Peiper's acquaintance in Kraków before the Second World War, concludes: 'Peiper was accused of being lazy, of writing very little, of constantly capitalising on the same dozen or so poems. But as a poet and critic he took responsibility for each and every word he wrote – and, unfortunately, that was not a common attitude then. Anyway, two well written books are better then zillions of tomes of unrestrained loquacity. Peiper's *Poematy* is most definitely the most interesting phenomenon in the entire

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[126] Julian Przyboś, *Sens poetycki*, Vol. I, op. cit., 171-172.

[127] Jan Brzękowski, "Garść wspomnień o Peiperze" [A Handful of Memories About Peiper] in: *Poezja*, March 1970, Year VI, No. 3(52), 9; see also: Marian Piechal, "Rewelator nowej poetyki" [The Lawgiver of New Poetics], ibidem, 12-19.

avant-garde production in Poland."[128]

It is only fitting to close the discussion with one of Peiper's most beautiful and naturally flowing poems, *Oczy nad miastem* [Eyes Over City]:

I thought a nest
into the top of the highest factory chimney.
My eyes and I now inhabit it.

Here I live as if in a tower
of yet unbuilt cathedrals,
cathedrals of coal.
Under care of caressing pipes
rises toward me
the hot smell of man's toil and laughter.
The roar and giggle I hear
are a song in praise of earth's body.
Smoke, which flows around me
is a victory of coal's soul.

I tear out my eyes;
from the glass of curiosity I cut out wings
and fasten them to the eyes,
which I take in my hand
and throw into the air;
and my eyes,
flying mirrors,
circle over the city.[129]

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[128] Zygmunt Leśnodorski, *Wśród ludzi mojego miasta. Wspomnienia i zapiski* [Among the People Of My City. Memoirs and Notes] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1968) 319.

[129] Tadeusz Peiper, *Poematy i utwory teatralne*, op. cit., 36. In Polish:
W szczyt komina fabrycznego, najwyższego,
wmyśliłem gniazdo.
Zamieszkałem w nim wraz z mymi oczyma.

Żyję tu jak w wieży
niewzniesionych jeszcze katedr,
katedr z węgla.
Pod opieką pieszczących rur
wznosi się ku mnie
gorąca woń trudu i śmiechu człowieka.
Huk i chichot, które słyszę,
są pieśnią na cześć ciała Ziemi.
Dym który mnie opływa
jest zwycięstwem duszy węgla.

After having read this and several other poems by Peiper, a discriminating Canadian composer, critic, traveller and noted writer, Ron Hannah, expressed his opinion as follows: 'I see these as a wildly optimistic (even Whitmanesque, or reminiscent of Sandberg's *Chicago*) paean to "progress", as it was conceived nearly a century ago... Personally, I love the poems!"[130]

Nothing is to be added, for now...

Wyrywam oczy;
ze szkła ciekawości wycinam skrzydła
i przypinam im do boku;
biorę w dłoń,
rzucam w powietrze;
i oczy moje,
latające zwierciadła,
krążą ponad miastem.

[130] Personal electronic mail communication on 27 February 2008.

IV. *Since He's Not Here* – From Avant-garde To Realism

Did you want more darkness in order
to hide the sadness of your mind?
Tadeusz Peiper[1]

[IV.1] Peiper's avant-garde poetics manifests itself strongly in his two stage works, *Szósta! Szósta!* [It's Six! It's Six!], published in 1925, and *Skoro go nie ma* [Since He Is Not Here], which appeared in print in 1933. Stanisław Jaworski points out that *Szósta! Szósta!*, Peiper's 'first essay in drama,' was at the beginning perceived as a mere experiment, without much intrinsic value.[2] Julian Przyboś writes:

> But I want to talk about these two published, yet never produced, plays of the "father of the Avant-garde." When I read the first one, *Szósta! Szósta!*, in the year it was issued, I was disappointed by its trifling content. During that time I was working on some "gutsy" drama myself, and Peiper's play whose plot was based on an intrigue around printing of a book, which the book's author's enemy tried to prevent, seemed to me naïve, devoid of drama, and uninteresting. It also seemed a bit murky. I could not understand why... the second part of the play was not a development, but only a step back to what had already been told in part one. However, to tell the truth that second part seemed to me more appealing. Thanks to the composition of actors' movements [stage actions], one could imagine it on stage as something between a ballet and a pantomime. It was not until five years afterwards, when Peiper's commentary, which he then published, shed some light on his intentions – but I was not convinced by it and regretted that Peiper the dramatist was not equal to Peiper the theoretician. What he says in his commentary is much more interesting than the work itself...'[3]

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[1] Tadeusz Peiper, *Skoro go nie ma* [Since He's Not Here] in: *Poematy i utwory teatralne* [Poems and Theatrical Works] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1979) 385. [All translations by P. G-M unless indicated otherwise.]

[2] Stanisław. Jaworski, *U podstaw awangardy. Tadeusz Peiper pisarz i teoretyk.* [At the Foundations of the Avant-garde. Tadeusz Peiper – Writer and Theoretician] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1980) 209.

[3] Julian Przyboś, *Sens poetycki* [Poetic Sense], Vols. I & II (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1967), Vol. I, 174-175. 'Ale mam mówić o dwóch drukowanych, a nigdzie nie granych sztukach „ojca awangardy". Gdy czytałem pierwszą z nich pt. *Szósta! Szósta!* w roku jej wydania drukiem, byłem rozczarowany błahością jej treści. Sam wtedy płodziłem jakieś „bebechowe" dramidło i sztuka Peipera, której intrygę dramatyczną stanowiło wydrukowanie książki, wbrew

> Stanisław Jaworski confirms: '*Szósta! Szósta!* is built of two parts, first of which already contains the whole plot, whereas the second one only complements the first by returning to what had already been said earlier, but had not so far been shown on the stage... [The second part] is a retrospection...'[4]

These rather uncomplimentary assessments may be counterbalanced by the undisputed novelty of Peiper's first stage project. Przyboś noticed, but never expounded, the idea of interpretative (and creative) freedom introduced by Peiper in his play. *Szósta! Szósta!*'s interpretative openness, where so much is left to the potential director's discretion (not to mention the actors), was at that time a very fresh, innovative and stimulating concept of giving a work of art another ontological dimension: the work remains "unfinished" in that its content is in part "open," to be filled with improvised actions.[5]

Another—and most interesting!—aspect of Peiper's first play is its autobiographical context, its focus on the issue of authorship and ownership of a work of art. It seems that in *Szósta! Szósta!* he dealt with the "demons" of his past, the traumatic experiences related to losing his manuscripts, previously stolen twice,[6] and to his ongoing efforts to gain recognition as a poet, and not just as a theoretician. Seen in this light, *Szósta! Szósta!* becomes one of Peiper's most

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przeszkodom stawianym przez pisarza-rywala – wydała mi się naiwna, niedramatyczna i nieinteresująca. A także nieco niejasna. Nie rozumiałem... dlaczego ta druga część nie jest rozwinięciem akcji, a tylko jakby cofnięciem się wstecz ku rzeczom już opowiedzianym w części pierwszej. Co prawda, to właśnia ta druga część wydawała mi się bardziej interesująca. Dzięki ruchliwości zarysowanych działań można ją było wyobrazić sobie na scenia jako ni to balet, ni to pantomimę.

Dopiero komentarz Peipra ogłoszony w pięć lat potem wyjaśnił mi zamiary autora, ale nie przekonał, a raczej wzbudził żal, że Peiper-dramaturg nie dorównał Peiperowi-pisarzowi. To, co pisze w komentarzu, jest bardziej interesujące niż utwór.'

[4] Stanisław Jaworski, *U podstaw awangardy...*, op. cit., 210.

[5] *Cf.* Chapter IV.

[6] *Cf.* Chapter III.

personal and "dramatic" statements and commentaries on his life as well as on his personality.

[IV.2] His second play, *Skoro go nie ma*, is considered superior to *Szósta! Szósta!* Julian Przyboś does not hesitate to call it 'outstanding.' He explains: '*Skoro go nie ma* represents Peiper at his most mature (allow me here to use this impossible superlative). And—after having read it for the second time – and after twenty-five years!—my present impression is that it is an outstanding work. The story line is based on the workers' uprising in Kraków in 1923. But the workers only appear in it sporadically. For the most part, the main characters are intellectuals who are variously involved in the revolution – the drama occurs between them... I am puzzled that no theatre ever staged this play in a quarter-century from the moment it appeared in print! It does not speak well of the literary directors of our theatres. And this is a perfect drama for the socialist theatre, theatre that could show firmness and courage of the workers, and fickleness of the intellectuals... [*Skoro go nie ma*] is positive to the quick and is, most likely, the only pre-war work of this kind in our dramaturgy.'[7]

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[7] Julian Przyboś, *Sens poetycki*, op. cit., 177. '*Skoro go nie ma* jest więc dziełem najdojrzalszego (że użyję tego niemożliwego superlatywu) Peipera. I wydaje mi się teraz – po powtórnym – po dwudziestu pięciu latach! – przeczytaniu dziełem wybitnym. Akcja dramatu toczy się na tle powstania robotników krakowskich w r. 1923. Robotnicy pojawiają się w nim jednak tylko epizodycznie, dramat rozgrywa się między inteligentami w różnym stopniu wmiesznymi w rewolucję...

Zdumiewa mnie, że żaden z teatrów nie wystawił tej sztuki w ciągu ćwierci wieku od jej ogłoszenia drukiem! Niedobrze to świadczy o kierownikach literackich teatrów. Przecież to dramat wymarzony dla teatru socjalistycznego, teatru, który by chciał ukazać stałość i męstwo robotników, a zdemaskować inteligencką chwiejność... [*Skoro go nie ma* jest więc dziełem

Skoro go nie ma shows interesting similarities with the drama *Masse Mensch* by the German writer, Ernst Toller. The latter's biography sets the perspective for an understanding of Peiper's own personal ideology. Born in 1893, Toller, today known mostly to scholars who specialise in German Expressionism, enjoyed in the 1920s and the early 1930s huge international fame as a leading[8] German Expressionist poet, dramatist and radical activist associated with the political left. In 1918 and 1919 he took part in Germany's revolutionary movement in Bavaria and subsequently spent five years in prison. Subsequently accused of high treason, he might have been executed were it not for the testimony of Thomas Mann, Max Weber and other intellectuals on his behalf. Once immensely popular, his main dramas – several written between 1919 and 1924 during his incarceration – include *Die Wandlung* (*Transfiguration*, 1919), *Masse Mensch* (*Masses and Man*, 1920) and *Hinkemann* (*Hinkemann*,

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najdojrzalszego (że użyję tego niemożliwego superlatywu) Peipera. I wydaje mi się teraz – po powtórnym – po dwudziestu pięciu latach! – przeczytaniu dziełem wybitnym. Akcja dramatu toczy się na tle powstania robotników krakowskich w r. 1923. Robotnicy pojawiają się w nim jednak tylko epizodycznie, dramat rozgrywa się między inteligentami w różnym stopniu wmiesznymi w rewolucję... Zdumiewa mnie, że żaden z teatrów nie wystawił tej sztuki w ciągu ćwierci wieku od jej ogłoszenia drukiem! Niedobrze to świadczy o kierownikach literackich teatrów. Przecież to dramat wymarzony dla teatru socjalistycznego, teatru, który by chciał ukazać stałość i męstwo robotników, a zdemaskować inteligencką chwiejność.*Skoro go nie ma* jest więc dziełem najdojrzalszego (że użyję tego niemożliwego superlatywu) Peipera. I wydaje mi się teraz – po powtórnym – po dwudziestu pięciu latach! – przeczytaniu dziełem wybitnym. Akcja dramatu toczy się na tle powstania robotników krakowskich w r. 1923. Robotnicy pojawiają się w nim jednak tylko epizodycznie, dramat rozgrywa się między inteligentami w różnym stopniu wmiesznymi w rewolucję... Zdumiewa mnie, że żaden z teatrów nie wystawił tej sztuki w ciągu ćwierci wieku od jej ogłoszenia drukiem! Niedobrze to świadczy o kierownikach literackich teatrów. Przecież to dramat wymarzony dla teatru socjalistycznego, teatru, który by chciał ukazać stałość i męstwo robotników, a zdemaskować inteligencką chwiejność. Tylko ciasnotą panującą w minionym okresie tłumaczę sobie, że nie zwrócono uwagi na tę na wskroś pozytywną i bodajże jedyną tego rodzaju pozycję przedwojenną w naszej dramaturgii.'

[8] History corrected that perception in a brutal way. Today, Toller's output is largely ignored. Sadly, there is reason to believe that that harsh judgment was accurate.

1924). Other dramas, also staged hundreds of times in Germany, Britain and the US, are *Die Maschinenstürmer* (*The Machine-Wreckers*, 1922, based on the Luddite movement in England), *Hoppla, wir Leben!* (*Hoppla, Such is Life*, 1927) as well as an autobiography, *Eine Jugend in Deutschland* (*I was a German*, 1933). Disillusioned by the success of Nazism as well as by the rapidly diminishing response (if not complete indifference) to his artistic and political efforts in the late 1930s, Toller committed suicide while in New York in 1939.[9] By this act and its context, of course, he reminds us of Stefan Zweig, another German Jew who fell victim to the catastrophic pessimism of the times.

Despite its character, it is Toller's *Masse Mensch* that may be compared to Peiper's plays. Staged in Nuremberg on November 15, 1920, Toller's drama, built of seven tableaux stylistically informed by the Expressionist tradition and written in response to the revolutionary events of 1918-1919, tells the story of a bourgeois woman, named Sonja Irene L. (a character loosely based on a real person), who, in the end, becomes a victim of the revolution – and of her own beliefs. Initially, these beliefs consist of solidarity with the cause of the proletariat combined with a rejection of violence: despite her radical attitude, Sonja is opposed to revolutionary bloodshed, preferring strikes to military action. Gradually, under the influence of a "nameless" demagogue, Sonja's beliefs change, and she is able to endorse violent revolutionary force as the means to achieve the desirable end (closing lines of the third tableau). In the process,

[9] For more details concerning Toller's life and *œuvre*, consult: Malcolm Pittock, *Ernst Toller*, Boston 1979.

she willingly sacrifices her marriage (her husband is a state official) in the interests of the "masses" and participates in the bloody strife during which the revolutionaries execute an opponent resembling her husband. Following the suppression of the revolution, Sonja finds herself in prison, where she comes to the realisation that her initial convictions were correct: nothing justifies taking someone else's life in the name of a cause. Reflecting upon what has happened, Sonja decides to bear her part of guilt to the end – "I am guilty," she admits, and rejects all assistance offered to her to escape. Since her escape would involve killing a prison guard, she decides to stay in prison and die.

Although much more positive in its outcome, Peiper's play is related to Toller's through its emphasis on how revolutionary events affect and influence human psyche and, eventually, behaviour. There are four main characters in the play, a woman and three men, whose stage names are derived from the names of their respective occupations and/or their social rôles: Stena (stenotypist; in Polish: stenotypistka), In (intruder; in Polish: intruz), Narz (Stena's fiancé; in Polish: narzeczony), and Przyw (the leader of the workers; in Polish: przywódca). As Jaworski points out, *Skoro go nie ma* is not a play about revolution. The Kraków uprising is there, in the background; it is present and is presented indirectly – yet it is also impossible to escape. As remarked earlier, psychological interactions between the characters constitute the main area of the author's attention. Each character operates within a different mental space: Stena remains undecided as to her real feelings and finally—like the main

character in the Toller's play—chooses Przyw over Narz, her (now former) fiancé; Przyw is a typical politician-demagogue who eschews deeper reflections for the sake of achieving his goals by the simplest means (Jaworski even speaks of his 'thoughtlessness');[10] Narz inspires pity and anger by his wavering attitude towards the workers and their demands; whereas In arouses contempt by his opportunistic stance – he only follows the workers because they have won (at least for the moment).

Another characteristic of *Skoro go nie ma* is the language Peiper decided to employ: free of metaphors which made *Szósta! Szósta!* so esoteric from the point of view of the critics and audiences alike (the play was finally staged in the 1970s); ascetic, abbreviated by numerous ellipses; and colloquial[11] – often like Toller's Expressionist stage diction. It is fascinating to see how far behind Peiper had left his original æsthetics and how close he approached realism, also in his precise stage setting directions.[12]

[IV.3] Unlike his poetry (almost always inspiring controversies and, not infrequently, heated polemics, even journalistic ruckus) and like his stage works, Tadeusz Peiper's first novel, *Ma lat 22* [He is 22], appeared on, and then quickly disappeared from, the market almost unnoticed, and if noticed at all – it met with almost unanimous indifference. The novel was published in Kraków by

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[10] Stanisław Jaworski, *U podstaw awangardy...*, op. cit., 215.
[11] Ibidem, 219.
[12] Ibidem, 219-220.

Peiper's own editorial venture, Koło Wydawnicze „Teraz" [The Publishing Circle "Now"].[13] Similarly to what happened with the *Zwrotnica* a decade earlier, this time, after having published only three titles: his own *Poematy* of 1935 and *Ma lat 22* of 1936, as well as the great Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska's important play *Zalotnicy niebiescy* [The Heavenly Suitors], first staged in 1933, issued by „Teraz" in 1936, financial restraints forced Peiper again to abandon this editing enterprise, which promised so much yet never fulfilled the promise.[14]

Stanisław Jaworski provides an interesting detail regarding the original edition of *Ma lat 22*, whose first run left the printery, Drukarnia Ludowa [People's Printery] on 29 February 1936. Apparently, some copies of *that* first edition were marked as "second edition", despite the date of completion of the printing cycle being given the same, 29 February. In all probability this was done in order to boost weak sales of the initial run of the freshly printed novel.[15] But it might also have been an anticipatory move to generate interest in the work, both "first" and "second' editions released simultaneously to create an impression of a "hot" literary item. Indeed, a curious gloss upon strategies of small, "independent" publishing houses then active in Poland (and perhaps at any given place at any given moment).

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[13] Tadeusz Peiper, *Ma lat 22. Powieść* (Z serii: *„Poprzez lata"*) [He is 22. A Novel (From the cycle: "Throughout the Years")] (Kraków: Koło Wydawnicze „Teraz", 1936).

[14] Stanisław Jaworski, "Komentarz" [Commentary] in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.) *Ma lat 22. Krzysztof Kolumb odkrywca* [He is 22. Christopher Columbus The Discoverer] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1977) 549.

[15] Ibidem.

[IV.4] Contemplated from the perspective of time it is still uncertain even today whether what happened to Peiper's first novel resulted from cruel unresponsiveness of the reading public, or was an accidental twist of fate. The work itself is curious in that it is practically devoid of any narrative experimentation. In fact, as Stanisław Jaworski points out,[16] the critics were puzzled by its narrative simplicity, its stylistic, if not formal, compliance with the well established rules of realistic writing: 'one would expect an entirely different novel from Peiper.'[17] Obviously, those who expressed such opinions upon the novel's appearance on the market had sorely missed the point – already in the late 1920s and early 1930s, in Peiper's two final volumes of poetry, *Raz* [Once] of 1928 and *Na przykład. Poemat aktualny* [For Example. A Topical Poem] of 1931, a change in poetics taking place is visible. When compared to Peiper's two previous poetic volumes, *A* and *Żywe linie* [Living Lines], both of 1924, a remarkable volteface on narrative technique is witnessed, a rapid evolution from experimental pursuits to the more "down-to-earth" sources of inspiration, selection of lexical tools and, ultimately, resultant process of communication. These later, much more influential, closing tomes of Peiper's poetic output (the 1935 *Poematy* is nothing more than a summary, a collection of the previously written verse)—*Na przykład* marking most decisively the moment of creative breakthrough—

[16] Stanisław Jaworski, „Przedmowa" [Foreword] in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.) *Ma lat 22. Krzysztof Kolumb odkrywca*, op. cit., 6.
[17] Ibidem.

are remarkable in their focus on the most immediate, urgent and "tactile" political and social stuff his poetry is now made to mirror and comment. In them, Peiper becomes a reporter of the present day and it is (or should be) no surprise to see his renewed interest in the proven tools of narrative trade. One ought to remember about his inclination to writing prose, at first journalistic and critical prose, in the most direct and intelligible manner. Writing about Peiper's theoretical texts Karol Irzykowski stresses out their precision: 'An acrobat of metaphors and incomprehensible in his poetries, when he [Peiper] decides to descend from the heights and put his feet firmly on earth, *i.e.* in his articles, he is clear as a thinker, and as a stylist he at present belongs to the most sophisticated ones in Poland. What in his poetry frightens away and causes fatigue, used in moderation in his articles becomes delightful... *Nowe usta* [The New Lips] is a veritable stylistic gem."[18] Another aspect instrumental in Peiper's evolution from the earlier, metaphor-heavy texts to the much less complex realist narratives was recognised by Jerzy Kwiatkowski in a new, influential tendency becoming prominent as a result of general social and political situation in the early 1930s, a tendency which reflected the specific *Zeitgeist*: 'As was the case in poetry of that epoch,' says Kwiatkowski, 'the most significant caesura in the development of prose during the twenty-year interwar period falls

[18] Karol Irzykowski, „Burmistrz marzeń niezamieszkałych" [The Burgomaster of Vacant Dreams] in: *Wybór pism krytycznoliterackich* [Selected Critical Writings] (Wrocław, Warszawa, Kraków, Gdański: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1975) 503-504. „Akrobat metafor i niezrozumialec w swoich poezjach, gdy chodzi zwyczajnie poziemi, tzn. w swoich artykułach, jest jasny jako myśliciel, a jako stylista jednym z najwyrafinowańszych w Polsce. To, co w jego poezjach odstrasza i męczy, w artykułach zastosowane z umiarkowaniem jest wdziękiem. [...] *Nowe usta* są prawdziwym cackiem stylistycznym."

in *ca.* 1932. This caesura is marked out by two factors: 1) the emergence of a new wave of literary debutants; 2) the impetuous turn of prose towards contemporary social topics, performed in the spirit of radicalism, realism and authenticity, and caused by the economic crisis, pauperisation of the society, increasing authoritarianism of the government, and sharpening internal conflicts... Writers direct their attention to the urban proletariat, who are experiencing the calamity of unemployment... At the same time the countryside is rediscovered, more and more often shown from the perspective of class and political struggle. The destitute unemployed and the landless become standard heroes of many prose works of those years... The literary works which directly reacted to the socio-political crisis in Poland—they can be described as belonging to social [not socialist, P. G-M] realism—were the outermost manifestation of the tendencies, which typified the prose of that period. On the one hand these tendencies,' Kwiatkowski continues, 'signify the growing sense of literature's social responsibility and social duties, and on the other indicate the return to the so-called formalist realism, in other words – to "transparent" language and intersubjectively verifiable, "imitative" [mimetic] representation of reality."[19]

[19] Jerzy Kwiatkowski, *Dwudziestolecie międzywojenne* [The Twenty Interwar Years] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2001) 282-283. Same, *Literatura Dwudziestolecia* [Literature of the Twenty Interwar Years] (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990) 237-239. Although appearing under different titles the two books are practically identical in their content. It is not clear why same book was published twice, each time under different title.

Bogdana Carpenter makes an additional resolute yet elegant comment on why Peiper reorientated his æsthetics, linking this act to psychological determinants:

> The narrative form and realistic style of Peiper's late poems can be explained by the internal dynamics of his poetics, but they might also have a deeper psychological cause... It is difficult to find another Polish poet so adamant in dissociating personal experience from the act of writing poetry. And yet, paradoxically, one of the most illuminating commentaries is his autobiographical novel, *He Is 22 Years Old*. Peiper wrote the novel after his last poem, *For Example*, had been published in January 1931, and it is telling that he turned to the novel when he had stopped writing poetry or, most probably, could not write poetry any longer. His novel was a thinly disguised autobiography. Why the poet whose greatest effort for many years had been to build a thick wall of obscure metaphors around his own person turned to intimate autobiography is best explained by the psychological notion of self-repression.[20]

[IV.5] In all probability, Bogdana Carpenter's assessment and suggestion as to the complex psychological roots of Peiper's switch to realism are correct – albeit in part. For it seems that in light of his later poetic work, already penetrating very deeply the meadows of non-metaphorical, realistic narratives—his exemplarily "sober" and, as Jerzy Kwiatkowski would have said, "transparent" journalistic and theoretical writing falling into the same category—the decision to abandon experiment for the sake of the well established, more easily understood and received, purportedly "reader-friendly" narrative practice may not necessarily be 'best explained by the psychological notion of self-repression.' In his late poetry Peiper did "v i o l a t e" his rigorously self-imposed, hitherto

[20] Bogdana Carpenter, *The Poetic Avant-garde in Poland 1918-1939* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1983) 109-110.

sacrosanct integrity by deliberately manifesting his social stance, now transmuted into lexical constructs betraying a high degree of presumed accessibility. He did it in such an ostentatious and "impulsive" manner and, moreover, overstepped the previously unbreakable barriers of his poetics to such an extent that *Na przykład* was immediately censored and ordered withdrawn from the market, then became a subject of a court case, and was finally confiscated. To put it briefly, Peiper's new communicative act, whose realist pedigree was initially visible in his journalistic and theoretical texts, later in his poetry, and in the end in his artistic prose, found its ultimate aspirations in topicality and actuality. Perhaps some other psychological forces were at play there, turning self-repression into self-acceptance. Or perhaps it was just a calculated compromise, so often intrinsic to the elusive literary and material success. Nonetheless, psychological aspects aside, the fact remains that by the mid-1930s, when his first novel appeared, Peiper had been a realist for at least half a decade.

[IV.6] From the point of view of narration, the novel offers interesting possibilities for analysis of its structure and that of the participants in its narrative communication. First of all, despite Jaworski's cautious claims to the contrary,[21] the novel's real and implied authors could not differ much less. If the story's real author is, as it is fairly well known, a Polish-Jewish intellectual, a man of

[21] Ibidem.

(many) letters and, to a certain extent, an activist and sympathiser of the Left, who started writing in order to satisfy his progressive philosophy of social change, then the implied author is, supposedly, someone imagined as representing quite a similar tradition, for the narrative focuses on a relationship between a youth born into a well-to-do family—a son of a local politician (mayor of the city of Rzeszów instead of Podgórze where the real Peiper was born and lived in his youth, but this is, as Jaworski asserts, but a cosmetic change)[22] and a successful business woman dealing in real estate, a youth who, for one, very early on becomes attracted to socialism—and several characters interacting with whom delineates his intellectual (mental) and physical progress into adulthood. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan suggests that in such cases of narrative interaction between the participants, most readers will instantly and 'intuitively feel' that the implied author is, indeed, 'a construct inferred and assembled by the reader from all the components of the text.'[23] As well, given the context in which this particular narrative appears—the context and details of Peiper's life, his personal "story"—the similarities between the two authors become rather striking. In point of fact, *Ma lat 22*, the very first novel Peiper wrote,[24] is in spite of the realistic bloodline of his late verse so different in its

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[22] Ibidem.

[23] Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London and New York: Rutledge, 1992), 87.

[24] And still controversial. Andrzej Chruszczyński calls it "immensely boring... As prose writer Peiper is quite helpless" whereas the distinguished critic, Kazimierz Czachowski (1890 – 1948), praised it for the "courage of its sincerity." See: Andrzej Chruszczyński, *U schyłku międzywojnia. Autentyzm literatury polskiej lat 1933 – 1939*. (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1987) 206-208; *cf.* Stanisław Jaworski, "Przedmowa" in:Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław

scope from his earliest versified work, that it would be hardly justifiable to say that here, the implied author is 'far superior in intelligence and [at least] moral standards' to the actual real author named Tadeusz Peiper.[25] Another interesting question arises from the fact that the main part of the story is told through the narrator's third person singular specific internal monologue, and thus several intriguing options are available for analysis in terms of the story's narrative voice(s). These and other relationships between the participants of Peiper's communicative act are indeed of much interest.

Worthy of note is the concept of time in this particular narrative. The novel's initial timeline offers an attractive combination of analepsis and prolepsis as the hero habitually looks back, reflects on his life through a series of events, which occurred in the past yet project into the future, *i.e.* his present. Although this (self-)analytical process refers to certain past events, it is clear, however, that the at some points the narrative's time will cross repeatedly with the hero's present. The hero, in turn, reaches back in time and muses (and this is the most correct word to describe the action) upon what he is experiencing. It does not become obvious until the very last chapters of the narrative that it was intended to explain his escape, and that everything had led to the concluding drama. Again, the analysis of this narrative's time proves useful to demonstrate certain theoretical concepts of Barthes, Chatman, Genette and others.

Jaworski, Ed.), *Ma lat 22. Krzysztof Kolumb odkrywca* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1977) 11.

[25] Ibidem.

As pointed out earlier, *Ma lat 22* is concerned with relationship between two seemingly incompatible ideological and emotional paradigms. These two paradigms can be referred to as:

1) social radicalisation as manifested by the main character, Ewski's, early involvement in illegal and semi-legal socialist and irredentist activities; ideas of independence, women's emancipation – early feminism propagated by... men, class equality), and

2) Ewski's resistance to the notion of accepting comfortably the more prosaic sides of reality, and necessity for change in individual, personal, "private" attitudes (as personified by his inflexibility towards women as well as his attitude towards "lower classes"). Bogdana Carpenter makes a revealing remark, pertinent both to the author and his *porte parole*: "The young protagonist of Peiper's novel, Ewski, is tortured by the constant suppression of his own feelings and his inability to manifest them. The personality trait leads him to adopt secretiveness as a conscious, wilful manner of behavior and an attitude toward life: "One has to bury what is dear in life deeply inside oneself. Not to show it, not to speak of it... You will be quiet, you will be silent. You will hardly be..." Peiper the theoretician wrote of "pudor poetæ," of the "shyness of feelings" and the need to disguise them behind pseudonyms. Self-repression on the psychological plane was wilfully translated into an æsthetic theory of self-repression. However, the need for self expression that was so severely repressed in his poetry reasserted itself and returned with all its force in the

novel. The same kind of self-revelation in his poetry was impossible for Peiper, since this would mean disloyalty to his own ideal of poetry. To avoid violating his integrity and to remain faithful to his principles the poet needed another form of expression, and the novel best suited these needs. In his poetry there were already indications of this future evolution."[26]

[IV.7] But, as usual, there is "more to the story" than that. *Ma lat 22* offers a good example of embedded narrative, in which several levels of narration co-exist and complement each other. In the initial analysis of Peiper's narrative two related theories are useful to illustrate the argument. Boris Tomashevsky's formalist theory of *fabula* and *syuzhet* can easily be harmonised with Gerard Genette's structuralist theory of *histoire* and *discours*. As Martin points out, the *fabula* can be summarised as 'the raw materials of the story' whereas *syuzhet* can, in turn, be summarised as 'procedures used to convey [the *fabula*].' And he continues: '[t]he materials are an abstract "constant" in fiction making; the words and techniques used can vary. There are obvious reasons for this distinction. We can't discuss the "how" of storytelling without assuming a stable "what" that can be presented in various ways.'[27]

Correspondingly, structuralists such as Genette (and also Seymour Chatman) have employed two terms similar to the ones used by formalists: *story*

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[26] Bogdana Carpenter, *The Poetic Avant-garde...*, op. cit., 109-110.

[27] Martin, Wallace. *Recent Theories of Narrative* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991) 107-108.

(*histoire*) and *discourse*. 'For Genette,' as Martin indicates, '"story" is made up of the pre-verbal materials in their chronological order and thus corresponds to one formalist definition of "fabula." Genette's "discourse" contains all the features that the writer adds to the story, especially changes of time sequence, the presentation of consciousness of the character, and the narrator's relation to the story and the audience.'[28]

Martin is cautious in dealing with the above theories: he justly subjects them to scrutiny and questions their "reconstructive" chronological dimension: '[T]he conceptual clarity gained by distinguishing fabula from syuzhet, and story from discourse, is achieved at a certain price: it implies that what the narrative is *really* telling is a chronological story—one that the reader tries to reconstruct in the right temporal order—and that the elements of narration are deviations from a simple tale that existed beforehand. The result is a powerful method of dissecting narrative, but it pays scant heed to the narrator's structural reintegration of the materials in larger units of action and scheme.'[29] However, despite the novel's concealed temporal linearity, in the case of *Ma lat 22* such objections do not seem necessary. The narrative is—almost—a traditional one, with all the formal strategies clearly delineated and easily recognisable. Even the numerous flashbacks with all their reversed chronologies are arranged in a fashion which makes it possible to reconstruct the implied time sequence.

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[28] Ibidem.

[29] Ibidem, 109.

In *Ma lat 22* we can respectively recognise two elementary *fabulae/histoires* as well as two elementary *syuzhety/discourses*. On the first level, we recognise a fabula/histoire of Ewski's memories. The syuzhet/discourse corresponding to this fabula/histoire is the story about the relationship between Ewski and his environment (family, friends) in the past. On the second level, another, embedded fabula/histoire is present: that of young man's psychological development, overcoming all "temptations" and then... escaping to Paris just before making any serious commitment to either the cause of independence or a woman. The second level embedded syuzhet/discourse is the story about love unfulfilled (or, rather, suppressed): *Ma lat 22* may be seen as 'a simple tale that existed beforehand,'[30] a typical *Bildungsroman*.

However, this simplicity does not mean that *Ma lat 22* is a s i m p l i s t i c story (no matter how "unoriginal" its subject is). On the contrary, Peiper's skillful use of narrative strategies led to creating a story whose innermost structure still offers possibilities for analysis of its narrative levels, functional and thematic synthesis, and temporal relations.

All in all, as indicated before, *Ma lat 22* is Peiper's ultimate farewell to his earlier æsthetics. It took him fifteen years to abandon the avant-garde idealism.

[IV.8] Tadeusz Peiper belonged to that generation of post-First World War

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[30] Ibidem.

Polish artists who, already at the outset of their activities, were geared up to do away with what they perceived as a compromised, tired æsthetic; who were eager to deal with the 'ready-made' *modus operandi* of the avant-garde (Expressionism, Futurism, Dada) and at the time the much lesser known literary experimental tradition – Joyce, Kafka, early Beckett *et aliis*); who were keen on absorbing it instantly; and who were subsequently able to re-evaluate it and develop it further still—all this and "more"—without too much internal torment. High-spirited, youthfully optimistic curiosity, combined with post-war mental relief, institutional support, and benevolent tolerance of and encouragement from at least some of the older members of the community, namely the modernists who flourished in Poland roughly between 1890 and 1914 (Stanisław Przybyszewski, Leopold Staff, Stefan Żeromski!), prepared ground, as Bogusław Schaeffer puts it, for exploration of the 'potentialities of the material.' This is how it may have looked from the very limited (French, Italian, German) European perspective, at least. Pierre Boulez, the famous *enfant terrible* of the musical avant-garde of the post-Second World War era, speaking within a slightly different context, yet in universal terms, and exaggerating a little on the point of the supposed æsthetic *vacuum* which each avant-garde movement has tried to fill, summed it up best: 'Immediately after the war there were great hopes for a generation (and especially for the generation that had realized failings and weaknesses of its predecessors and immediately marched ahead, full of enthusiasm), to make its own discoveries on what amounted to a

tabula rasa... [N]othing was ready and everything remained to be done: it was our privilege to make the discoveries and also to find ourselves faced with nothing - which may have its difficulties but also has many advantages. As a teacher (I am not a very good one, but I have had two or three years' experience), I have seen the great difference between the problems facing the next generation and those that we had to face. Our first thought was unity of action. The discoveries we made... were comparatively easy: it was simply the primary effort needed to lay the foundations of the new language, starting from the existing sources, which we had chosen afresh for ourselves. This language developed in a way that might have resulted in a new academicism. It was to avoid this that every composer began to explore his own world, which is the normal and desirable way for things to happen, the most serious fault that could be found with composers of the same generation in different countries being too great a mutual resemblance, a following too closely of the same path. There were cases in which this accusation was justified, though not for long, individual personalities developing and becoming more marked with age, and divergencies with them. There finally appeared temperaments able to express themselves with the freedom that all of us had striven so hard to achieve.'[31]

Also speaking from the later perspective, albeit referring to another period, Cornelius Cardew was nonetheless critical, his main concern being that 'academicisation' of the movement, which Boulez said had been feared already at

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[31] Pierre Boulez (Jean-Jacques Nattiez , Ed.) *Orientations – Collected Writings by Pierre Boulez* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986) 445-446.

an early stage.[32]

The US composer and literary scholar, Christian Wolff, too, gives his side of the story in a different way from Boulez, and from a different angle. But what he says can easily be applied to the "official" situation in Polish letters right after the First World War. In the US, for instance, there seemed to be nothing heroic about that period immediately following the war. Asked to describe the artistic scene in New York, he answered: 'There was a lot of reaction going on... It was a very bleak picture...'[33] It is a rare occurrence to see such a frank assessment in regards to the general situation of the American avant-garde, or *any* 20th Century avant-garde at that, usually depicted in a nimbus of heroism, this assessment being offered by one of the key figures of the movement. What Wolff did was this: in just a few terse sentences he matter-of-factly deconstructed the legend.

[IV.9] To give a synthetic overview of the (obvious) socio-political environment immediately after the Great War:

1° In the Soviet Union progressive tendencies were being gradually quashed as a matter of course; their representatives—whose experimenting was more often than not quite modest—accused of 'formalism' and either silenced almost completely (like so many former Avant-gardists), or, if luckier, forced to accept

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[32] Cornelius Cardew, "Modern Music Has Found Its Feet But on What Low Ground" in: *The Musical Times*, Vol. 105, No. 1459 (Sept.1964), 674.

[33] David Patterson, "Cage and Beyond: An Annotated-Interview with Christian Wolff' in: *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Summer, 1994) 54-55.

and cultivate the permitted style(s) and genres, rooted in the Russian realist tradition.

2° In Scandinavia, Great Britain and its dominions the new tendencies had been looked upon with typically Protestant, traditionally conservative suspicion and it took time before that changed (countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa were for the most part steeped in British conservatism, often perpetuated—as in Canada—by the hopelessly conformist, second-rate artists, often imported from the Isles; and many of their most talented home-grown artists elected to leave their native countries – an unfair exchange whose impact continued to be long felt).

3° Japan, and the rest of Asia, had its own traditions and—fundamentally colonial—problems; it was not until much later that institutional foundations for e dissemination of modern music—still largely inadequate—were laid.

4° Given the number of talented artists in the region, in Latin America—especially in Mexico—the situation was a bit different; yet fragile economies, a weak middle class, and poor infrastructure generally influenced the artistic communities there in negative ways.

Generally speaking—and without referring to any particular period for now—unlike the visual and like the musical, the literary avant-garde has never been as robust and influential as its apologists would have loved it to be. It is an illusion to attribute any widespread causal force to it. At the outset, before, during and following the Great War, it enjoyed limited institutional and private

support in several (only several) European countries – yet probably to a much larger extent than it did elsewhere. But, to repeat what has just been said: with a few exceptions to the rule (Pablo Picasso, Igor Stravinsky, James Joyce, William Faulkner, surrealism and Salvador Dali, later Le Corbusier, Federico Fellini, Pierre Boulez), even if the socio-economic and political circumstances were propitious, never has the avant-garde been able entirely to take over—or even just be present within—the sanctioned channels of propagation and experience (that is not its goal anyway – or is it?). If it ever has been able to achieve so massive and unattainable a task, it has done so fragmentarily and to a very narrow degree (as—to give a few examples—in a number of housing schemes by Pieter Oud, including the well-known Kiefhook housing estate in Rotterdam; in a couple of similar Bauhaus projects such as the Dessau Laubenganghäuser; and in early Soviet Constructivist propaganda art as well as revolutionary literature—Mayakovski—and in the cinema of Pudovkin and Eisenstein).

[IV.10] Symptomatically, Peiper's much discussed "switch" from the avant-garde æsthetics to the more common narrative techniques, was as much the result of a reëvaluation and redefinition of his avant-garde project—or, to use ironically the traditional "charged" concept, of his creative curiosity and unrest (which in some cases appears highly doubtful; perhaps the noun "impatience" is more apt here)—as of his psychologically, commercially, ideologically and

æsthetically driven desires to enter the mainstream market. This went far beyond aspiring to an *occasional* benefit such as an *occasional* publication in and important "official" literary magazine somewhere, or an *occasional* commission from an established publisher. In this sense, to paraphrase the famous Cardew statement about Karlheinz Stockhausen, many avant-garde artists had begun 'serving capitalism.' (Wild declarations about 'restoring the trust of allegedly alienated audiences' are nothing more than admissions of defeat and amount to masochistic sexual submission to the system – an attitude deeply embedded in the postmodern experience.) But the avant-garde did 'serve capitalism' in any case, or, rather, was dependent on it all the way (or dependent on any other socio-economic system within whose structure it may have made its appearance). Regardless of its transcendental (as proposed by Renato Poggioli),[34] critical (as proposed by Theodor Adorno), destructive and decadent (as pro-

[34] 'Perhaps the most original interpretation of avant-garde was presented in the 1940's by an Italian art theoretician, Renato Poggioli. Poggioli's theory of avant-garde... can be characterized as socio-psychological. It strives to offer a sociological and psychological explanation for the emergence of avant-gardist phenomena. Poggioli's aim was not to study avant-garde art in itself, but rather what "avant-garde art reveals from the cultural situation as such." His focus was not in the aesthetics or poetics of avant-garde, but in its ethics and politics, as one could nowadays put it. Poggioli took also in consideration the impact of mass culture on avant-garde, for in the United States, where he lived and taught, the dichotomy between mass culture and high culture opened up much earlier than in Europe. Poggioli's theory is interesting not only in the sense of the history of ideas, since it links avant-garde to early German romanticism and surrealism, it is also rich in historical details. It can be regarded as an important milestone against which it is possible to compare other interpretations of avant-garde. This does not mean, however, that this theory remains without objections.' Irmeli Hautamaki, "Introduction" in: *The Origin of Avant-garde*, available in electronic version at:
http://mustekala.kaapeli.fi/artikkelit/1070380027/index_html. Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-garde*. Translated from the Italian by Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968).

posed by György Lukács), or re-integrative (as proposed by Peter Bürger)[35] modes of thought and operation in relation to cultural politics; no matter what its—affirmative or negative—approach to artistic praxis; despite its metaphysical/speculative or rationalistic philosophical and/or ideological closures: being a product of liberal high capitalism early in the 20th Century—being also technology-hungry and with technology obsessed—the avant-garde finally gave in to the pressure exercised by that industrial *bourgeois* system's instruments of mercantile persuasion (indoctrination), these obviously not aiming at the avant-garde itself, but rather at its potential clientele, the receiver/consumer. This reliance on technology (sphere of production) explains, partially at least, why the avant-garde turned out to be so fragile when confronted by hostile authoritarian regimes – and later on by consumerism of the late capitalist formation. [Partially only, because as Stefan Jaworski points out with good reason, a synthetic overview of the avant-garde and its social, economic and philosophical tenets will always be incomplete—especially from the point of view of Marxist critique—without taking into consideration dissimilarities between Western avant-garde movements which developed in highly industrialised countries, and their East/Central European counterparts which arose and func-

[35] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Translated from the German by Michael Shaw, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). Bürger's elegant and influential discussion is confined, and this is perhaps its main point of contention, to pre-selected avant-garde movements such as the post-revolutionary Russian avant-garde, Dadaism and early Surrealism. See also: Dietrich Scheunemann (Ed.), *European Avant-Garde: New Perspectives*, (Amsterdam – Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 2000) 8-11.

tioned for a long time within the predominantly agrarian formation.[36] It is a matter of different levels of experience, argues Jaworski: watchwords such as urbanisation, industrialisation, worship of technology and modern civilisation meant one thing in the highly developed western lands, and another in agrarian areas such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, or Ukraine.][37]

Bogusław Schaeffer, in some way echoing Adorno and Horkheimer (*cf. The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*) and, to some extent, Benjamin (*cf. The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*) stresses the dilemma of the avant-garde thusly: 'Someone said that the present-day avant-garde is tired. It is not true. What is true is that the term refers to very many individuals who only in appearance express themselves in avant-garde vocabulary, but in reality they are stuck in contemporary conventionalism, which is possible today because the interpersonal communication process has been so exceptionally and universally perfected. NB, the avant-garde' [he continues]

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[36] 'First of all, one should remember that Russian futurism is intrinsically heterogenous to the extent one can speak of two futurisms: pre- and post-revolutionary. In the early declarations and manifestoes of Russian futurists, one can hardly find any trace of overt and direct interest in technology and science. Unlike their Italian counterparts, they almost ignored the issue.' Edward Możejko, 'The Twisted Bond: Technological Progress and the Evolution of Russian Literary Avant-Garde' in: *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, Tomus XI, 1993, 90. See also: Zbigniew Folejewski, *Futurism and its Place in the Development of Modern Poetry* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980). Says Folejewski: 'Italian artists went as far as announcing that the machine should be adored as superior to man. But for the majority of the Russians these things remained rather alien.... In this respect the attitude of many 20th century Russian artists was no different that that of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and other 19th century men. The country poet Esenin lamented the horse chased by the railway engine; the futurist Klebnikov presented an apocalyptic vision of a monstrous mechanical bird.... Mayakovsky was one of the very few Russian poets for whom not only was the city street more familiar ground than a meadow, but also – in his own words – he 'saw electricity in an electric iron' while Pasternak saw it 'in the lightning in the sky.' (p. 8).

[37] Stanisław Jaworski, *Awangarda* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne 1992) 9-10.

'cannot be numerous, as its principal attribute is going against the main, 'mandatory' current. Besides, avant-garde music which evokes new technologies does not have a chance—does not have time as it were—to take part in discourse, for even before it can posit itself within artistic reality its propositions are intercepted, taken over, made shallow by others – and this is why the *bona fide*, unyielding creativity is never appreciated. This is important [to understand] especially in our times when art is not experienced but consumed, thereby destroying the distinct character of each and every, even the most unconventional, piece of artistic creation. And it so happens that—in spite of avant-garde music and the official music milieu remaining apart—the most outward elements of avant-garde discoveries are imported and transferred onto other phenomena, onto intermediary products. This is why that great creative passion the artist expressed in new form and new technology is now publicly falsified; and stripped of its most substantial characteristics such as innovation, uniqueness, originality, spontaneity – it now becomes exposed to rejection, to misunderstanding.'[38]

Viewed from such a perspective, Tadeusz Peiper's calmly obstinate, uncompromising stance deserves attention – and respect. At this point it seems useful to try to place his *œuvre* within the general avant-garde narrative. What orien-

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[38] Bogusław Schaeffer, *Muzyka XX wieku. Twórcy i problemy* [20th Century Music. Its Creators and Issues] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1975) 309-310. *Cf.* Max Horkheimer, Max and Theodor Adorno (Gunzelin Schmid, Ed.), *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Walter Benjamin, "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction" in: *Illuminations: Essays and reflections.* Translated from the German by H. Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968).

tation did he represent, and to what extent can his output be identified with the avant-garde project?

[IV.11] According to Jean Weisgerber—if we are to accept his generalisations—the avant-garde may be defined as 'a series of movements, *i.e.* actions, often collective (and sometimes individual), represented by a certain number of writers and artists expressing themselves by means of manifestoes, programmes and periodicals, and distinguished by their radical opposition to the [currently dominant] order existing in literature (forms, subjects etc.) as well as—broadly speaking—in the political and social spheres. In most cases' Weisgerber continues, '[the avant-garde] is about double resistance (often even total resistance, also towards customs, behaviours and morality), it is about separation—connected with the will to outmarch the epoch—separation limited to either pure destruction (nihilism) or aiming at reaching a certain ideal of reconstruction (formal experiments, political activities, utopianism etc.).'[39] In other words, Weisgerber postulates two synchronous currents within the avant-garde: a destructive, negative, nihilist and resistant one (for instance: Futurism, Dada); and the other (re)constructive, affirmative, largely proactive (for instance: De Stijl, Soviet avant-garde Left after the October Revolution; today: "ecological" avant-garde as represented by the Canadian composer, writer and philosopher R. Murray Schafer and his disciples). For simplicity's sake we will

[39] Jean Weisgerber, 'Les avant-gardes littéraires' in: *Neohelicon* 1974, 414.

refer to the former as the Epimethean avant-garde, and to the latter as the Promethean avant-garde.

It is reasonably safe to say that Peiper's *œuvre* belongs to the Promethean avant-garde. It belongs there due to its intrinsic, 'non-combative' properties which on the fundamental, s u b s t r u c t u r a l level consist in:

1. a **humanistic** belief in the necessity of art in general and literature (poetry) in particular as a means of enlightened communication (hence absolute absence of any indication of commercial opportunism detectable in Peiper's mature poetry and critical prose) and of shaping reality;
2. a **constructive** approach to creative process(es) in general (metadisciplinary mind-set, writing techniques involving an array of possibilities ranging from mathematical principles to intuitive decision-making on the reader's part—these preceding it seems, among others, the ideas of Conceptual Art);
3. an **unrestricted** attitude concerning the communication process, receivers being entrusted with considerable interpretative freedoms;
4. a **logical** manner of dialoguing with his "clients" *i.e.* other writers, critics, scholars, readers, listeners (*cf.* his simple and sometimes humorous, yet always thorough and precise theoretical texts and interpretative suggestions as well as his attention to typography (always intended to help the process of absorbing the ideas, habitually reduced to the simplest, clearest, most evocative signs);

and on the s u p e r s t r u c t u r a l level are exemplified by:

1. **avoidance of formal chaos**, *i.e.* preference for elegant and clear articulation of narrative time (the poet makes sure that differences between lexical—"textural" and "timbral"—blocks are easily discernible; in a sense Peiper's lexical models may have been informed by the Russian Constructivists' techniques in which—in order to prevent textual monotony and anonymity of the almost totally chaotic material, like in Dada texts—certain parameters are made to dominate the overall visual and aural result of the given section of a text);
2. **avoidance of narrative anger**, i.e. preference for expressive, 'Baroque' lyricism on the one hand and monumentalism on the other (prevalent in some of his sizeable works employing the **"process of blossoming"** and advanced, sophisticated metaphors); one may say that even pure violence is elegant in Peiper's works;
3. **avoidance of communicative aggression**, *i.e.* preference for rich yet subtle and almost conventionally soft, warm and crystalline lexical figures, usually selected for their expressive—and not just technical—qualities;[40]
4. **avoidance of morphological unintelligibility**, *i.e.* preference for formal clarity (potential harshness of complex metaphors often softened by discreet verbal "instrumentation" and preference for sustained narrative time – as in his justly celebrated erotic poems *Na plaży* [On The Beach] and *Naga*

[40] This assertion, however, has to be taken carefully, as some of Peiper's poems and prose writings (be it critical or artistic) do contain rather explicit statements, usually related to relationships between the two sexes.

[Naked]).

[IV.12] Moreover, it appears that, despite his "conversion" to realism, Peiper had till the end remained "unabashedly" positive and optimistic in his creative work. Even his extreme poems such as *Noga* [Leg] and *Pod dachem ze smutku* [Under the Roof of Sadness] were the logical outcome of his interest in affirmative metadisciplinary research and experiments with metaphor, rhythm and rhyme, rather than in frenzied and obsessive attempts at creating something shockingly new at any cost ("novelty for novelty's sake"). Peiper's judgments invariably impress by their objective nature and restraint, as when he alluded to the situation in Polish letters upon his arrival in 1921. One of the things that happened around the time that he encountered was the collision between classicist ideas of the Skamander group and pure Futurist thinking, which Peiper considered somewhat chaotic. These two competitive æsthetics were really the polarities, and it was really when they significantly conflicted, "bumped" into each other. And as he said in a series of articles, they were such conflicting extremes. Skamandrite subjection to tradition is such an extreme of restraint; and Futuristic poetry at its worst, or at its most extreme, was almost unrestrained anarchy. And those two things—total restraint and total anarchy—were polarities which, according to Peiper, had to come back together as far as modern literature is concerned. Within a very short period of time, some of Peiper's contemporaries in fact went to the extremes of what he considered

unnecessary limitation on one end of the spectrum and lexical mayhem on the other end. What had happened, and perhaps it was inevitable and necessary, is that thanks to the Peiper theoretical contribution, Polish poetry had come into a balance between these two approaches.

The exigencies of Peiper's own metadisciplinary inspirations and principles led him very early on to making a number of substantial propositions whose impact on general avant-garde æsthetics in Poland has been felt ever since. It is valid to say that in the "practical" areas of *theoretical* formulations (essays, articles, notes, commentaries, interviews), *lexical* assertions and—which is often overlooked—*formal* considerations, Peiper had made contributions comparable to those Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz and Leon Chwisted had made in the philosophy of art and creative process (including formal strategies). Furthermore, by introducing two "practical" concepts of refined metaphor and formal order, Peiper fundamentally transformed literary ontology.

[IV.13] In comparison with the perspectives of the European Avant-garde before 1939, Peiper's achievement may only be considered as highly individual and highly original, and as a consequence, relating it to other æsthetic propositions is exceptionally difficult. Aware of what was happening around him, Peiper routinely distanced himself from those æsthetics which, popular though they were, could not stir his imagination enough, or were in what he perceived as opposition to his own system. He knew personally some of the leaders of

the European Avant-garde: he was on good footing with Kasimir Malevich (a photograph of the two in Berlin is extant) and even tried to facilitate Malevich's immigration to Poland, an attempt which was not successful; in 1927, he and Malevich visited Germany and went, among other locales, to Berlin and Dessau, where at Bauhaus they met with Walter Gropius, Wassily Kandinsky, Hannes Mayer, László Moholy-Nagy and Mies van der Rohe. This visit resulted in two articles, *W Bauhausie* [At the Bauhaus][41] and *Malewicz w Polsce* [Malevich in Poland].[42] During his years in Spain, Peiper met Robert Delaunay and the composer Manuel de Falla, not to mention his becoming thoroughly acquainted with the progressive Spanish-language poetry of the period, to which his article *Nowa poezja hiszpańska* [On New Spanish Poetry] attests, as do translations of several poems.[43] If *W Bauhausie* and *Malewicz w Polsce* are but occasional texts, of which the former has the character of a typical journalistic report, while also including sections in which Peiper speaks at length of his positive æsthetic impressions during the visit, then the article on Spanish-language poetry offers a deeper reflection on the nature of new poetic tendencies displayed therein. Peiper finds this modern Spanish poetry to be a specific offshoot of the European Avant-garde and praises it for its focus on the renewal

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[41] *Zwrotnica*, June 1927, No. 12, 255-256. The same, final issue of *Zwrotnica* (page 254) features Malevich's article, "Deformacja w kubiźmie" [Deformation in Cubism].

[42] *Zwrotnica*, March 1927, No. 11, front cover.

[43] Tadeusz Peiper, "Nowa poezja hiszpańska" [On New Spanish Poetry] in: *Nowa Sztuka* [The New Art], February 1922, No. 2. The same issue of *Nowa Sztuka* features Peiper's translations of poetry by Jorge Luis Borges, Vicente Huidobro, Ernesto López Parra, José Rivas Panedas, Guillermo de Torre, and Rafael Lasso de la Vega.

of the poetic métier, which, according to Peiper, makes it similar to French poetry. He also commends it for its supposed cult of the poetic sentence and unorthodox metaphors, which together create 'a reality unto itself;' he recognises the importance of juxtaposition: 'Sentences lay next to each other. Without links, without transitions. There exists between them only a web-like bridge of a most general idea. Images and thoughts move before us as if on the screen of a magic lantern: image, pause, image, pause. The [conventional] stream of continuity is gone. Almost total absence of conjunction...' Then Peiper proceeds to discuss the place of rhyme and rhythm among Spanish poets: 'This characteristic desarticulation [Peiper's term; probably best translated as "disjointedness"] of poems, this division into blocks, is mirrored by a special treatment of the musical element. Rhyme and rhythm are the most palpable constituents of the poetic work, the skeleton of its unity. In new Spanish poetry there is no rhyme, and the rhythm is free from any periodicity...'[44] According to Peiper, these characteristics of modern Spanish poetry have both positive and negative facets. What is positive is that the poem may now concentrate on itself, filtering out anything that is unimportant, unnecessary from the point of view of poetic syntax. 'Such poems,' says Peiper, 'are instilled with [a] strange appeal. There is in them a specific, unique concentration, unique gravity, unique solid density.' At the same time, such desarticulation/disjointedness may lead to the creation of a large field of interpretative and creative arbitrariness. It may lead

[44] Ibidem.

also to automatic, i.e. mechanical, and chaotic multiplication of sentences, which could now be freely reordered without affecting the whole of any given poem. Peiper considers these lax formal attributes to permeate much new poetry in Spain, and indeed elsewhere.

[IV.14] Two other articles are of interest when examining Peiper's relationships with the international Avant-garde: *Fernand Léger*[45] and *Ozenfant i Jeanneret* [Ozenfant and Jeanneret].[46] Subjecting Léger's work to a positive critique, Peiper recognises three main attributes of the painter's work: "will to form" ["wola formy"], "characteristic choice of building material" ["charakterystyczny wybór budulca"], and "love of colour" ["miłość barwy"]. To Peiper, it is form, and an artist's approach to it, which is tantamount to the single most important issue in contemporary painting. In the present time, Peiper writes, painting is finally able to do away with impressionistic, "foggy," formlessness ["aformia"]. The idea is to endow a visual work of art with logical formal qualities: it should constitute an organic whole. A visual work of art does not need to mirror reality. After all, a painting, as with every other work of art, creates its own reality: it is reality unto itself. 'Art is a formatted allusion to reality' [Sztuka jest to uformowana aluzja do rzeczywistości]. In this context, Léger's work may be seen as a model example of the new approach to form in painting.

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[45] Marjan Bielski [Tadeusz Peiper], "Fernand Léger" in: *Zwrotnica*, May 1922, No. 1, 12-14.
[46] Marjan Bielski [Tadeusz Peiper], "Ozenfant i Jeanneret" [Ozenfant and Jeanneret] in: *Zwrotnica*, July 1922, No. 2, 39-43.

'His paintings resemble (and only resemble) certain real objects, but are always reduced to the simplest shapes, cleaned of any haphazardness, shapes which are best suited to build a painting in a methodical way.' In terms of his "building material," Léger shows a predilection for "tubular" shapes: 'It is worth noting,' says Peiper, 'that among all stereometric figures it is the cylinder which stands out due to its greatest formal potential... There is something very direct, almost sensual in the æsthetic impact this—one would like to say feminine—geometric figure exercises. And looking at Léger's paintings, at that tenderness, at those almost erotic caresses which he bestows upon his cylindrical forms, one feels that he does not do it under the influence of some cerebral motives, but does it under the direct spell of the irresistible charm of certain, defined forms.' According to Peiper, the cylinder possesses dynamism not to be found in other forms, such as a geometric prism, and is also the only form which can help synthetically transpose the objects of modern technology onto the painter's canvas. Thanks to these two qualities, Léger is able to draw inspiration from those elements of reality which still remain inaccessible to many painters: large engine rooms and their architectural components, ships' funnels, machine parts. He, in Peiper's opinion, captures remarkably well the spirit of the modern day and its technological achievements. Equally praiseworthy is the manner in which Léger manages colour in his paintings, following the Impressionists' enjoyment of colour, yet distancing himself from their take on form (or lack thereof). And hence the rich palette of colour in his

paintings: 'In his paintings the sensual love of colour is one of those elements, in which today's men, desirous of strong stimuli, express themselves the best.'

In the article on Ozenfant and Jeanneret and their Purism, Peiper reasons along the same lines as before, in his Léger text. What he finds particularly positive and thought-provoking in the theory of Purism is its stress on how important and useful the material products (objects) made (mass-produced) by man – glasses, bottles, vases, plates – are to modern art. These objects are manufactured with one quality in mind: giving them simplicity, usefulness and durability at the lowest possible level of loss of matter and energy. The laws of economy determine these objects' proportions and, therefore, their final form. As a result, objects emerge which are simple in their external appearance and close to geometric forms; moreover, owing to their close ties to man's everyday life, *i.e.* their usefulness, they are endowed with the ability to inspire æsthetic reactions. These attributes, in turn, the Purists try to transpose visually and encapsulate in their paintings. While acknowledging their indebtedness to Cubism, Peiper ends his argument by pointing to the Purists' originality: 'Their painting is their own... Already at first glance we recognise that their style is completely new, unlike anything that was before.'

[IV.15] Peiper's choice of his "international" analytical subjects was not at all accidental. Without a doubt, he elected to concentrate on those æsthetic phenomena, those artistic movements or individual artists, closest to his own phi-

losophy – or those to which he was diametrically opposed. What interested him most was to find among various tendencies the ones which confirmed the validity of his own project, and thus he allotted much critical space to the movements to which issues such as rationalistic and orderly approach to form, narrative logic and stylistic purity were of the utmost value: Positivism (with its appreciation of modernity, namely progressive technology), Cubism (with its rethinking of form and geometrisation of the narrative space), Bauhaus (with its focus on objectivity of the creative process and usefulness of its end products), Constructivism (with its understanding of formal order), and Purism (with its exploration of simplicity and adoration of formal purity).

Yet, when he deemed it necessary, Peiper did not hesitate to offer critical, and negative, analyses of Futurism (discussed elsewhere in this text) as well as Surrealism, to which he devoted two chapters of the essay *Droga rymu* [The Way of Rhyme].[47] As Wiesław Paweł Szymański observes,[48] Peiper begins his discussion of Surrealism in a very contradictory manner. *Per* Peiper: 'Despite the fact that in poetry I have postulated order and meticulous construction, I will defend Surrealism.'[49] At first, he briefly describes the basic tenets of Surrealism, and informs on its impact: 'These days in France, Surrealism has be-

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[47] Tadeusz Peiper, "Droga rymu" [The Way of Rhyme] in: *Przegląd Współczesny* [The Modern Review], November 1929, No. 91. Reprinted in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *Tędy. Nowe usta* [This Way. The New Lips] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1972) 77- 80.

[48] Wiesław Paweł Szymański, *Neosymbolizm. O awangardowej poezji polskiej w latach trzydziestych* [Neosymbolism. Studies on Avant-garde Polish Poetry in the 1930s] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1973) 29ff.

[49] Tadeusz Peiper, "Droga rymu," op. cit., 78.

come quite known. It goes farther then any other movement concerned with creative linguistic freedom, inspiration, directness. In his manifesto, André Breton describes Surrealism "as pure psychological automatism, through which writers attempt to express the true way mental processes [thoughts] function." So, it has to be something akin to "the dictate of thought, taking place without any control of reason and outside any æsthetic or moral concerns."[50] The meaning of this is made even clearer when the author gives, so to speak, a "manual" of the idea he proposes... Now, it becomes absolutely apparent,' Peiper continues, 'what are the intentions of Surrealism: the most ideal passivity toward what occurs in writers' thoughts; the most faithful and therefore quick and automatic [bezrozumowe] noting down of the stream of thought, with all its ramifications and convergences, with all that accidentalness and looseness, and lack of attention to any pre-planned line of thought. Absolute lack of planning, lack of reasoning, absolute creative chaos in the process of writing.'[51] Peiper then comments upon negative critiques of Surrealism, whose opponents accused the Surrealists of following 'unattainable illusions;' the impossibility of achieving total automatism in the creative process; the impossibility of capturing "pure thoughts;" and the impossibility of excluding reason from the process of writing, no matter how fast the text is jotted down. These

[50] *Cf.* André Breton. *Manifestes du surréalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981). Breton's original goes as follows: « Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d'exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute autre manière, le foncionnement reel de la pensée. Dictée de la pense, en l'absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute preoccupation esthétique ou morale ».

[51] Tadeusz Peiper, "Droga rymu" in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 77.

allegations, Peiper writes, may be questioned and explains that it is indeed possible to employ the strategies of Surrealist writing: although full automatisation of writing and total exclusion of reason from the creative process are not likely to occur, the writer can get very closer to that ideal state. Here, paradoxically perhaps, reason may play an active rôle in helping the writer to free the text from unnecessary lexical debris: the writer may intentionally lay out a framework within which she or he could employ reason on a limited scale to clean up the work from any unintended elements, which may have found their way into it during the process of automatic writing: in this case, reason acts as a filter of sorts. What Peiper had in mind was likely analogous to musical improvisation, which is based on forming a predetermined framework, in which certain elements (intuitively selected possibilities of the material) may automatically appear, and from which some are automatically excluded. During the act of writing, Peiper elucidates, the writer's thoughts are joined together not only because of their nature (reason), but also because of the individual nature of words (intrinsic attributes of language), through which they are expressed. Taking advantage of this, and through specific exercises and practice, the writer may be able to reduce to a minimum the rôle played by reason. Surrealist technique, according to Peiper, is not about absolute exclusion of consciousness from the creative process – it is an attempt at achieving the maximum level of success possible while aiming to exclude consciousness from the creative act.

And then Peiper completely changes direction and concludes: '**I defended Surrealism in order to demonstrate that it cannot result in a work of art, poetry.** How could it? Since the writer's intentional creative act is only reduced to jotting down; since there is no plan; since there is no selection of thoughts – which ones to choose, and which ones to abandon – such procedures cannot lead to creating a work of art, for an inventory cannot be the work of art.'[52] Nevertheless, Surrealism is not a failure, Peiper says. It may not offer any legitimate works of art, but having introduced new ways of perceiving and recording mental processes, it has established another new literary genre, which cannot be put side by side to and associated with any other. This development has resulted in a great dilemma for future poetry, now torn between uncontrolled, subjective psychological explorations ('a motion picture of feelings and thoughts') on one hand, and ideas of a more objective character on the other. The former brings about poetry which, one presumes, idolises individual poets and disregards the reader, and the latter poetic works in which the 'author's *ego* is no more present than in any other man-made product,'[53] and whose main aim is to resonate with various sectors of the potential readership.

Even though history adjudged Peiper's assessment of Surrealism to be incorrect, his general observations were to a large extent accurate, at least from the standpoint of his own theory. It is very symptomatic that Surrealism never

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[52] Tadeusz Peiper, "Droga rymu" in: Tadeusz Peiper (Stanisław Jaworski, Ed.), *Tędy. Nowe usta*, op. cit., 78.
[53] Ibidem, 80.

made inroads among Polish poets, who found other ways of dealing with the issues analysed by Peiper. His verdict on Surrealism epitomises his position toward the international Avant-garde: sometimes appreciative (Bauhaus, Purism), sometimes lukewarm (Surrealism), sometimes negative (Futurism) – but never uncritical.

[IV.16] 'Post-WW I literature developed differently in Poland than in the countries of Western Europe. Tragic wartime events found reflection in works written during the war itself and in later retrospective prose, but for the Poles, unlike for many nations of Western Europe, the end of the war marked the thrilling start to the task of setting up the framework of the newly-formed state. There was no place or time for the settling of intellectual scores with the recent past, as was so important in France and Germany; it was not wartime grudges but rather the thought of the future that imparted shape to new artistic agendas.'[54] Both Peiper and his colleagues of the Kraków Avant-garde 'were convinced that the way to effect the necessary change in mindset was to make a breakthrough in people's imagination. Nevertheless, their concepts concerning the methods and objectives of stimulating the imagination were diametrically different and closer to the precepts of abstract painting than to surrealism, as were their concrete artistic postulates and achievements – so innovative that painter Władysław Strzemiński could cite Peiper as the precursor

[54] Alina Kowalczykowa, "The Interwar Years – 1918-1939" in: *Ten Centuries of Polish Literature*. Translated from Polish by Daniel Sax (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IBL PAN, 2004) 203.

to his theory of constructivism.'[55] Seen in such a context Peiper's *œuvre* reflects these attitudes like no other. His were the highly optimistic and idealistic beliefs in positive rôle of art, which he perceived as a force capable of shaping the reality: 'The cult montage of concepts in Peiper's manifesto "Metropolis. Mass. Machine" [Miasto. Masa. Maszyna] expressed an apology of modern technical civilization – and hence the postulate of a profound transformation in art, which was intended to take part in shaping this new world... Such inspiration drawn from the modern world, from the city and civilization, also led... to think of the Polish avant-gardists in the context of Le Corbusier and his projects to practically adapt art to meet the needs of modern man.'[56]

Peiper managed to conceive a literary theory which offered a systemic view on art in general (he was one of the earliest theorists involved in studying cinema) and literature in particular; the rôle of the author and the audience; and their respective places in socio-temporal space of modernity. Close to some methodological properties, suggestions and propositions to those of the Formalists, New Critics as well as Marxists, this theory was nonetheless an original contribution to the literary thought between the two world wars.

In his writings, especially in his best poems, maybe also in the stage play *Skoro go nie ma*, he achieved a complete, and highly convincing, union of theory and poetic practice. It has to be emphasised that Peiper constructed his theory without being aware of other similar attempts in Russia, England and

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[55] Ibidem, 212.
[56] Ibidem, 213-214.

the US. It has to be emphasised, too, that at his best, his poetry reached artistic levels hardly contested by the other Polish avant-garde poets of the inter-war period. That in the end his late output turned out to be unequal to his earlier theoretical and creative feats, indicates a drama of a disillusioned, bitter human being whose life experience, which he at some point rejected, and which during his proverbial heyday he did everything in his power to keep at bay, had finally caught up with him – and his art.

Today, Tadeusz Peiper's position in Polish literature is unassailable. Not only is he credited with making significant contribution to theory of art and literature, but also, according to Stanisław Jaworski, with endowing this progressive theory as well as progressive (avant-garde) literary praxis with strong moral foundations.[57] Jaworski also identifies Peiper as 'probably one of the last [writers] who believed that writing may influence thinking [perception of reality] – and thinking may influence and change the society.'[58] Yet it would be very unfair to imply that Peiper's idealism proved futile. On the contrary, his proactive approach was later fully appreciated and imitated by those Polish poets and literary critics—many of them quite prominent—whose aims were similar to his – in that they used writing as a morally charged weapon against the inertia of the system, in this case the pseudo-Communist system imposed in Poland after 1945.

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[57] Stanisław Jaworski, "Tadeusz Peiper" in: Anna Skoczek (Ed.), *Historia literatury polskiej. Dwudziestolecie międzywojenne* [The History of Polish Literature. The Interwar Period], Vol. VIII (Bochnia, Kraków, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SMS, 2006) 306.
[58] Ibidem, 307.

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